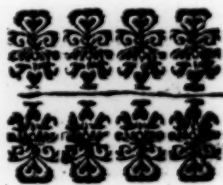


O F
DEVOTION.

By J. S.



Printed in the Year, 1678.



TO THE
Right Honourable
THE
COUNTESS
OF
KINNOL.

MADAM,

IT was the pressing Desire of
Your Pious Heart, which in-
spir'd me with a Will to sa-
tisfy your Christian Enquiry
what true Devotion was, and to
write this Piece. A laudable Am-
bition to dress up Your Soul in

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The Epistle Dedicatory.

such a manner, as it might look Beautifully in the Eye of Heaven, made You strain towards th' Attainment of It; but Your acute Understanding did not so easily find out its certain *Idea*, nor discover clearly what was it's proper Nature. You were too Wise, to think it consisted in Light Bigotteries; and those Affections which were built up from Solid Truths, were apt to seem too Learned, and too Rigid for that flexible and Soul-melting Disposition. Manly Thoughts appear'd too Stiff, Childish ones too Weak to compound it; and it bred in Your Ladyship no small Difficulty, to hit the Golden Mean between flying Fancies,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

cies, and low Dulness. Nay,
You scarce knew Her when she
was high in Your Self; and were
loath, out of a Humble Errour,
to think the prompt Flights of
Your Spirit could consist with the
Heaviness or Distractedness of Imagination.

Your Ladyship might have discovered Her nearer hand, and better express than I can do it here, in the Exemplary Life and Conversation of the Earl of *Kinnoul*, Your every-way most Worthy Husband. What Virtue was there which, when occasion presented, he did not readily Execute? What Duty, either to God or his Neighbour,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

bour, which through the whole Course of his Life he was known to neglect? His Piety was steady and fervent; his Deportment Noble and Affable; his calm Reason, fixt by Christian Principles, was never shaken or mov'd from it's just Level, by the Whirlwinds of Passion, which toss the Generality, and shipwreck such vast Multitudes. His Disregard of the World was Admirable; or rather, (to speak more properly for one of his Rank) his *just Regard* of it; esteeming it, and behaving himself as if he esteem'd it, to be what truly it is, a Stage so to act our respective Parts on, as to please the Great King of Hea-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Heaven, and his Glorious Court, our Spectators. None of it's gay Follies affected him; no Bribe, either of Honour, Profit, or Pleasure, had ever the Power to warp him. Nor had Dulness the least share in this unmoved Temper of his Mind: His Wit was piercing, and wanted nothing but the rambling Part of it, which shoots Bolts at Rovers. Nor was his Judgment less solid: though he had not the Vanity to blaze either, or discover them without precise Necessity; and, I can speak by Experience, not very many, even of those who make a Profession of Knowledge, understood better either the Grounds of our Faith,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

or the Reasons why we ought to be Virtuous; I mean, the Proportion the Means has to the End, Grace to Glory, or a well-led Life here, to the Attainment of Eternal Bliss hereafter. No wonder then, he clos'd so Pious a Race with so Happy an End, and look't upon Death as the Treshold to Heaven. May we not say, Madam, That the Remembrance of his Life and Death, as from some Luminary plac't in a Higher Sphere, sends down their Influence upon Your Self; prompting You powerfully with like Steps, to follow such a Leader. Whoever considers the strictest severity of Your Widdow-state, the
total

The Epistle Dedicatory.

total Application of Your Mind to Devotion, and Your earnest straining towards Heaven with all the Powers of Your Soul, will discern You proceed as if You made account the Better Half of Your Self were there already. But, I must remember Madam, You are yet alive, and, in that Circumstance, just Praises are liable to be esteem'd Flattery. The rest I ow'd to the Memory of Your dear Lord; and to my own Duty, not to let so great an Example of exactest Virtue, in a Person of so high a Rank, especially clouded by his own sober Modesty, and silent Humility, be lost to us for want of proposing it to the World.

To

The Epistle Dedicatory.

To return then to my Matter:
Your Ladyship might, I say, have
found a Living Character of De-
votion nearer hand, and have
sav'd me all this Labour; and
you already saw all was Virtuous,
all was Saintly & throughout the
whole Course of his Life. But
it was the exact Knowledge of
what *Devotion* was, as distin-
guish't from the Common Natures
of Virtue and Goodness, which
You aim'd at: For, You had
observ'd, that many were held
Virtuous and *Good* Persons, who
were not esteem'd *Devout*; and
that this Word *Devotion* had some-
thing in it's Notion particularly
Excellent, not found in the o-
ther.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

ther. This Excellency Your Ladyship aspir'd to; and therefore, You wisely desir'd in the first place, to gain a clear Discernment of what it was, and in what it consisted, as singled from other common Considerations, belonging to Goodness, which often run mixt with it.

Hence, I became oblig'd both to decypher *Devotion*, and dissect Her; and not only so to delineate Her Nature that it might be particularly known, but, by dividing her into her several kinds, and treating at large of her Chief Act, *Prayer*, to acquaint You more perfectly with her Composition.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

sition. In a word, You have here at once my Obedience, and Your own Duty; and that it may benefit Your Soul towards it's Improvement in Knowing Virtue, shall be the daily Prayer of,

Madam,

Your Ladyship's most Devoted,
and most Obedient Servant,

J. S.

T H E

THE
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

T*Hough this Treatise bears the Title (Of Devotion), yet I hope, it will not be expected, it should be either made up of Set-Forms of Prayer, or be as easy as Prayers use and ought to be : I have already declar'd, that the Intention of writing it, was to settle exactly the Nature and Notion of Devotion; which kind of Discourses, having for their Subject the Ground-work of the Matter they treat of, cannot possibly ly so open to a Common View, as those that concern the Superstructures, built upon them. Yet, I hope, there will be little found*
(a) *here,*

The Preface.

here, which may not be easily render'd Intelligible to any attentive Reader, who will think those Knowledges which advance his Soul, worth the pains of a serious Endeavour to purchase them: I am sure, none of it is disproportion'd to the Understanding of that Noble Personage, for whom, as a private Paper, I first writ it: If all Readers be not such, I heartily wish they were; and endeavour, as well as I can, they should be so, by yeilding to the Sollicitation of Friends, to expose this Treatise to be Printed. No small Kindness from me, considering the Common Apprehension, that a Resolution is already taken and fixt by some, to find fault with all I have writ, or shall write: I beseech God, to send them more Charity, and me Patience!

It may be ask't, why such high Subjects should be writ in English? I answer, Because very many who understand not Latin, may be capable
of

The Preface.

of comprehending good Sense, and concern'd, too, to receive thorow-Information in such Subjects. Nor do I think any thing here unintelligible by the Generality, were there the same Application of mind us'd to improve Spirituality, as is employ'd in acquiring Temporal Things. I could also avail my self, of the Example of a Neighbouring Nation, which puts even those Authors that treat deepest Points (Fathers amongst the rest) into the common Language of the Country.

As for the Manner I observe in handling my Matter, I guide my self much by the Experience I have of what is needful for the Tempers of divers Spirits: I observe some exceeding Scrupulous they are not Devout; and yet, they not only intend, but strain with all their Powers to be so. Lest such well-meaning Souls, conscious to themselves they do their utmost; and yet, fearing
(a 2) they

The Preface.

they fall short of the Duty. they aim at, should (as there is danger) lose their Hope; I endeavour to up-hold it, by showing them, that an Intention firmly bent to God's Service, cannot fail of rendering them truly Devout. Others, conceit they want Knowledge requisite to attain it; wherefore, to humble the Pride of Humane Wit, and comfort their honest Simplicity, I show how their frequent Application to pious Duties, joyn'd with a sincere well-meaning, goes beyond all the high Knowledges of the acutest Understandings, if the will be never so little less Perfect. Others, are to seek in the Means to attain Devotion; which, therefore, I propose suitably to every ones respective Pitch. Lastly, I have observed many either neglecting totally, or less using Prayer; and that too, but faintly, out of an Apprehension, grounded on an Ill-principled Humility, that they deserve
not

The Preface.

not to be heard; and so, all they do in that kind, is in vain; as was once S. Teresa's Case, which she afterwards so feelingly bewail'd in her self, and of which she so Charitably fore-warn'd others. Such Persons, therefore, I strive to encourage, by laying open the Excellency and Utility of Prayer; and how Con-naturally Prayer for our true Good, & Virtue, is the immediate Dis-position to attain it; and so, is the very thing that renders us worthy to be heard. At once letting them see, that no Address to our infinitely bountiful Lord, can be put up in vain: and also, thence exhorting them to that Devout Importunity and struggling with Heaven, so much recommended by our Saviour; which by the constant and ordinary Course of Supernatural Causes, lay'd by Providence, cannot fail of obtaining the Blessing pray'd for. And is so far from injuring Faith, or abating its

The Preface.

Efficacy, that it exceedingly comforts and strengthens it, by letting us see how certainly God, unchang'd in Himself, performs his Promises to those who use the Means he has laid, and commanded to be us'd, to Effect those happy Changes in Us.

Hence, 'tis very easy to remark, that in this Treatise, I meddle not with the Efficaciousness of Prayer for others, nor with other stranger Effects of it, (nay, sometimes, even miraculous Ones) which, by means of a firm Faith, and Relyance on God, are brought to pass. Nor, lastly, do I Treat of Prayer (or Devotion) as they depend on God's Grace, or the secret workings of the Holy-Ghost, (as I hint also in the Treatise it self, p. 60.); which I from my Heart acknowledge to give us Ability to begin, continue, and consummate both Prayer, and every good Act that is Supernatural: Though an im-bitter'd Adversary of mine, will needs throw

The Preface.

throw that Scandal upon me, to deny it. What I concern my self with, is that part of our Christian Actions, or that Co-operation of ours with God's Grace, that stands under our Endeavours, which I strive through the whole, to encourage; and particularly in discoursing of Prayer, I meddle only with those Effects of it, which are the ordinary and necessary Consequents of a fervent and constant Address to God for our Soul's true Good, Virtue.

In a word, There are many and various Tempers of Spirits in Gods Church; amongst which, my Experience, as well as Reason tells me, there are not a few so Naturally Speculative, and given to look into the Reasons and Grounds of Things, that they find most comfort, and improvement in these Discourses that go to the Bottom, and give an account of Them from their Principles. To such Persons as those, I hope, I may,

The Preface.

May, when call'd upon, write, agreeably to their Genius and Pitch; not blaming, but heartily applauding those pious Men, who accommodate themselves to others. For, as it is a great weakness to imagin or expect that every manner of handling a Subject, will sute with every Capacity; so, it is no less to conceit, that any kind of Discoursing, so it be True, and agree with Christian Principles, can be such as sutes with None.

OF



CHAP. I.

Of Devotion in Common,
its Kinds, and the Means
to Attain it.

SECT. I.

*Of the Nature of Devotion
in Common.*

DEvotion is a word trans-
planted into our lan-
guage from the Latin,
and derived from the
primitive *Vovere*, to Vow. It im-
ports, among the Heathens, a steady
and fixt Resolution, or rather Ty,
B obli-

obligatory, but yet voluntary; and that of unusual strength; such as carried them to the most difficult actions. It keeps the same notion among Christians, the Object only or Motive of the resolution changed. For, whereas false Glory was heretofore the most dazzling, and most prized end of the actions of the Heathens, and nothing was thought more glorious than to dy for their Country; they were said Devoted who voluntarily, in circumstances particularly remarkable, threw themselves for its sake, upon a certain death. So *Codrus* among the Athenians, *Curtius* and the *Decij* among the Romans, are remembred for Devoted to the service of their severall Countries; perhaps their resolutions having been confirm'd by some solemn Vow to their Idols. But, since we came to be Instructed in the notion, and inclin'd to the pursuit of true Glory and true Good,

Good, Devotion has got another Object: and, keeping the same Steadiness, and Promptness and Strength in its notion as heretofore, is apply'd only to the Service of God. It signifies, then, a resolution or addition to the Service of God; but strong and prompt: such as sets all the Powers of man efficaciously a work in all occasions that occur. It is not confin'd to any one kind: For, we say, a man gives Almes, Fasts, visits the Sick or Afflicted, goes on Pilgrimage, &c. out of Devotion; that is, exercises Devotion in all these Actions. But Prayer being the most ordinary and most frequent Act, by which men use to serve God, Devotion is most ordinarily understood of Prayer: and when we hear of a Devout man, we generally apprehend a man who prays *frequently*, and *well*. For, these two qualities enter too into the Notion of Devotion;

we not thinking him devout who prays but seldome, or carelessly.

§. 2. By what has been said, the Nature of Devotion may be understood; and we may perceive it is a Quality, or Disposition in Man, strong and always efficacious; which moves all his powers to act in the service of God, according to their several natures, both with frequency and perfection.

§. 3. Hence may be gather'd, First, that Devotion is a disposition of the Will. For, since no Power acts but as 'tis apply'd, Devotion, whose Nature 'tis to apply both the Understanding and all other Powers to Christian Action, must needs belong properly to that Power which in man is the Principle of Action, that is to the Will.

§. 4. Secondly, that this state of Devotion, being a constant bent
and

and readiness to perform the best actions on the best manner, is by consequence the *best State* the Will can possibly have in this World; and next to the necessary and continual Conformity to the Divine Will, which the Blessed have in Heaven.

§. 5. Thirdly, that this Promptness to put both the Understanding in act as to Prayer, and the other Powers as to Acts of Virtue, as it is a Disposition of the will, so it is to be lookt for in the Will *alone*; and not in the Acts either of the Understanding it self (much less of the Fancy) or of any other of those Powers which Devotion is to set a work. Whence follows cleerly that, though there happen never so much difficulty to elevate the mind actually, or rather sensibly, to God; never so many Impediments, nay even Incapacity to act feelingly, or tenderly; yet, as long as the Will on her part preserves her

self prompt to do all these, and can truly say with King David, *Paratum cor meum Deus, paratum cor meum, My Heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready*, there happens no loss, nor so much as Diminution, of interior solid Devotion. The Fancy (without whose co-operation the understanding in this state cannot act) may be restiff and backward; the inferior Faculties lame and clogg'd, whether through Impotency or ill Circumstances: But, a pious Soul ought not in the least be discouraged at these Accidents; (to which, in the dependence the Soul has now upon the Body, we were not Men if we were not subject;) nor think her self a jot worse: For, Devotion (as was said) is only in the Will; and the Will is not at all the worse dispos'd, because the Faculties, with which she would work, are indispos'd, and cannot obey her; no more than the Hand
is

is lame, because the Pen is bad, and will not write.

§. 6. Fourthly, That a Soul, which has a ready Will to pray, can never fail (though the Fancy be never so dull, or out of order) to please God by praying, or (which is all one) to have the Merit of Prayer. For, all Merit, or Actions that please God, proceed properly from the Will; whence a devout, that is, a hearty and ready *Intention*, which is the best Act of the Will, must needs be, in a high and special manner, *Meritorious* or Rewardable. Nay more, a devout Soul, intending and endeavouring to pray, and standing bent that way; that is, keeping that Intention unalter'd, and prosecuting her Endeavours as well as she can, actually is in prayer, or truly prays interiorly; though, for want of the Compliance of the Fancy, or Inferior Part of the Soul, (which one-

ly in Acts of Prayer is sensible) she does not experience it even while she has it; but, rather suspects the contrary; unless reflex Thoughts, and rais'd above matter, preserves her from being mistaken. Yet, the thing is clear, both by Reason, and (when by reflexion we observe what passes) Experience too. For, Prayer is nothing but an Elevation or Application of the Understanding to God; and, there can need no more to apply the Understanding interiorly to Objects already within her, but the Will to do so. Now supposing, as the case does, the Will applying as far as she can the Understanding, of necessity the Understanding must be apply'd interiorly; that is, Prayer is actually exercis'd. Again, however outward Objects striking the Senses, or inward Fancies irregularly stirr'd up and fluttering in a perpetual motion, cause in a manner

ner continual Distractions; yet, we may observe the Soul, when by reflexion it comes to perceive them, rejects those Distractions, and re-applies it self (after that seeming dull manner, which the Understanding, un-assisted with serviceable Fancies, can practise) to what it was employ'd about before. Nay, there would be no such thing as *Distraction* in Prayer, nothing for those Words to signifie; in case the Understanding had not been acting about some other Object before, and attending to it: The being diverted from which, and attending to a new Object we call *Distraction*: and this former Object can be nothing, but the Object of Prayer, *God*.

§. 7. A parallel instance to this case is that of Saint *Paul*, speaking of praying in an unknown Tongue.

Nam si orem linguâ, spiritus meus orat, mens autem mea sine fructu

B 5 *est.*

est. For, if I pray with my Tongue, my Spirit prayeth, but my Understanding is without Fruit; that is, he reaps not the Benefit of stirring up the Mind by new Motives or Discourses, which those Prayers, distinctly and perfectly understood and penetrated, were apt to suggest: Yet still his *Spirit*, or Superior Part of the Soul, is in common and confusedly elevated to God, still *spiritus orat*, the Spirit truly prays. So, in our case, in this dull state of praying, when the Fancy playes not, nor co-operates as is fit, the Understanding advances not in gaining those sights, which by Extension of former Knowledges into new Conclusions, through attentive discoursing of its Object, it might have attain'd: But still the superior part of the Soul, is by the Will fixt to something, which is not Temporal: (all such Thoughts suggested by the disorder

der of the Fancy, being held Distractions). She is then truly apply'd to her Eternal Good, and truly praying all the while; till, Intention altering all, she frankly and unconcernedly, relinquishes the Circumstances proper for Prayer, and applies her self to new Objects, without scruple or struggling any longer to keep out the Thoughts of them; which before she avoyded or repin'd at as Distractions; but, now admits and pursues voluntarily, as her Business, Duty, or End.

SECT. II.

Of Sloth.

§. 1. **I** Hope the Nature of Devotion in common may sufficiently be understood, by what has

has been already said: But yet, because Contraries help exceedingly to illustrate one another, I will make some short Reflexions upon its opposit, *Sloth*. This Vice is a certain lumpishness, and unweildiness in the Soul, through which she yeilds her self to be sway'd down-wards by the weight of Original Sin, inclining her to Temporal Objects; and so rendering her un-active and un-able, without difficulty, to apply and raise her self to such Thoughts and Actions, as dispose her for Heaven. I say, *In the soul*: for in her alone, *Vertue* and *Vice*, properly taken, and as they import Merit and Demerit, are lodged: The indisposition and disorder of the Fancy, and other material Powers, belong to the Body; and are not *Vice*, though they dispose and incline to it; and, if care be not taken, will cause it. Again, by these Words [*In the Soul*] I mean,

mean, in that Power which we call *Will*, or in the Soul, as she is *Will*. For, Philosophy, (which indeed is nothing but true deliberate or reflecting Reason) teaches, that Contraries belong still to the same Subject; and therefore, *Devotion* being an Affection of the Will, *Sloth* must needs be so too. And besides, 'tis evident that all Intellectual Vices are defects of the Understanding-Power, that is, Error or Ignorance; as, on the contrary, all its Perfections are Knowledges of Truths. But, there is no kind of shew, that *Sloth* should formally consist in *Ignorance* or *Error*, or *Devotion* in *Knowledge*; since they who have much Knowledge, may withall be very Slothful; and those who have very little, may be very Devout, very ready, and very constant in the performance of all Christian Duties to their Power.

§. 2. Hence follows, in confirmation

mation of the former Doctrine, that, as long as the Intention to pray perseveres sincere, there can be no sin of Sloth, nor ground of scruple of not having pray'd as one ought: For, so long the Will is not faulty, and so there is no moral defect nor sin at all in a Prayer no better performed; but all the imperfection in it springs either from Nature, or circumstances indisposing the Fancy; or perhaps, from want of skill or information in the Understanding-Power, how to go about one's Prayer; which is so far a fault as there is negligence in the will to use due means to attain so requisite a Knowledg. Wherefore in case any one doubts, whether he have behav'd himself negligently, carelessly or distractedly in his prayer, he must consider well whether he *intended* that carelessness, or those distractions: For, if he did not, 'tis evident it happen'd besides his Intention;

tion; and so was no moral fault.

§. 3. But yet this word *Intention* is equivocal, and may be mistaken. There are who think they do great matters, if, for Example, they make, as they call it, an Intention in the morning, of spending the following day in vertue and the service of God; when perhaps they never think of God or vertue after. This is but deceit: and 'twould be no better, to use the formality of making an act, fancy'd to be an Intention of praying, before Prayer; and then spend the time of Prayer in a free and unchecked entertainment of distractive suggestions.

§. 4. To understand the business, we must remember that every Action has a Finall, as well as an Efficient or Material and Formal cause; and that a man can no more act without a *Why* then a *What*. This End, when we know what we do,
is

is foreseen, and the Actor means or *intends* it: So that the Intention is woven into the Action, and a kind of part of it: as, if I go down, or up stairs, I intend to be at the bottom, or top; nor can it happen otherwise, if the action be rational, and accompany'd with Knowledg. And, if any action be done otherwise, (as, when people walk, or do other things in their Sleep or with a perfect Inadvertence) it is not counted a *Human Action*. In this sence, as no Action can be without an Intention, no more then without an End, so neither can the Intention be without the Action. For 'tis, as I said before, a kind of part of it; and we should laugh at him who would perswade us he had an Actual Intention of being at the bottom of the stairs, yet voluntarily stay'd at the top. But, as the understanding sees things to come, as well

well as past and present; it may see what is like to follow from an Action before the Action it self, and from that sight resolve or reject it: and may resolve for the future, as well as present time, and so intend before she acts. And, in this sence, Intention may be both before and without Action, which, before it come to be executed, the Intention may possibly change. Intention is taken in this notion, by those who amuse themselves with making artificial Intentions before hand. For plainly, they intend for the future; and, when the time comes, do nothing often-times of what they intended, and remain deluded. Now I understand Intention in the former sence; that is for such an Intention as accompanies the Action, and needs no formal endeavours on our part to make it: Since nature will joyn it to the Action, though we should endeavour

your never so much the contrary :
For, it is altogether as idle to imagine he, who knows what he does, can have a not-Intention to go down Stairs, who actually goes down, as that he has one, (I mean, for the present) who stays above.
* Wherefore, since this kind of Intention cannot be sever'd from the Action, 'tis clear that who thus intends to pray, truly prays, though never so many distractive thoughts interrupt and confound his Action. Neither are they, unless he voluntarily admit and mean to think of such things, properly Actions of his, but rather Passions or Sufferings. For, as the Eye cannot chuse but see what is represented to it, nor hinder it self from transmitting to the soul what it sees, nor the soul from perceiving what is transmitted : so neither can the soul hinder her self from receiving the impressions made by the inward stroaks of fluttering

tering Fancies, nor those impressions from having their Effect, but is in both cases more *passive* than *active*; and doth not so much *do* any thing, as hath something *done* upon her.

SECT. 3.

Remedies against Sloth.

§. 1. **T**O return to the matter in hand, All that can be said of this dryness, and disgustfulness in Prayer, caused by the not complying of the inferior part of the Soul with the superior, is this, that 'tis a Disposition, and indeed Temptation, to the sin of *Sloth*.

§. 2. By that Tediousness, It first tires, then discourages, and after frights us; till at last it gains so much upon

upon us, as to make us yeild our selves over to a neglect, sometimes omission, of customary, decent, or obligatory Prayers: and the same may be said in some proportion, of our yeilding to those Difficulties which oppose our exercising other devout Acts. Here then it is that a devout Christian soul must faithfully fight Gods Battel; and never consent, for want of gust, or for feeling disgust, to omit her Devotions.

§. 3. One of the best weapons she has to defend her self is (upon consideration of what has been, and, more, what will be said) to settle a firm judgment, that this state of Distraction is no ways faulty. This judgment would be made, not at the instant of Prayer (for then 'tis to be put in practise and the Prayer exercised by it, and so is needful to be had already, not then to be gotten); but at some fit season before hand
when

when the Fancies are most calm, and the soul can act with most clearness and force. And, when 'tis once made, let the soul be sure to act steadily according to it and pray on, how strongly soever Disgust, or Dryness, or whatever Engin the Devil chuses to imploy, may tempt her to the contrary. A little Resolution will compass this, assisted with the Reflexion how unreasonable it is to alter a course directed by our best and clearest Reason, for the suggestions of disorderd fancies. But if once those temptations can deceive a soul into these erroneous conceits, first, that all her Prayer is *fruitless*, and then *harmful*, as being in her apprehension a kind of *perpetual fault*, and such as she cannot mend (for she finds by experience she can do no better with all endeavours she can use); she is in danger to leave it quite off, and think it better not to pray at all, than to continue

tinue to do ill. And this I take to be one of the most dangerous temptations in the World: both because it comes mask't in the Vizard of Vertue, and so is apt to take with well-meaning Souls, which are not aware of it: as also, because Devotion being the best disposition of the soul to practise all Christian Duties, and particularly Prayer, which includes in it self the exercise of Faith, Hope, and Charity; it follows, that a soul which thus abandons her self to Sloth must needs languish away into a spiritual Consumption, and piningly decay in those Christian Virtues, which give life to all the rest, and without which the outward practise of others are but false appearances, springing from material habits, and as it were the Ghosts of true Vertue.

§. 4. Another Weapon, of great use in this kind of Fight, is this consideration, That we may be certain

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we merit in the sight of God or serve and please him by continuing our Prayer when we are seized with this Dryness and Dulness, and assaulted with Distractions; whereas we cannot be so certain of this when our Prayer is accompany'd with satisfaction and delight. The content taken in sensible feeling is so inbred and, in a manner, essential to a Soul, according to her Inferior part, or as she is the Form of the Body; and this natural propension to all manner of delights so heighten'd in us by Original Corruption, which still draws us from Spirituality to Sense; that we are apt to adhere and cling to whatever is thus agreeable: and this even in prayer it self. Whence it comes to pass, that, because nature so subtly seeks its own satisfaction, 'tis very hard, when this sensible pleasingness accompanies our prayer, to discern whether we are not serving our selves when

we

we should be serving God: at least it often happens, in this case of sensible delight, that our easiness and promptness to apply our selves frequently to Acts of Prayer springs, in part, from our love of this pleasure; which is a great alloy to the spirituality of Devotion, and to some degree taints the purity of our intentions. Whence, all spiritual Masters use to take great care, that those souls who find sweetness in their prayer, be not attacht to it, lest they fall into spiritual Gluttony, and depress the mind to sensible Objects by those very means which should raise it above them.

§. 5 Now all this danger is securely avoyded when our Prayers are disgustful: For, however they seem to us sapless and dry, yet we are sure the desire of pleasing our inferior part, or complying with our corrupt inclinations, has not any the least share in what we do; but that
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the Prayer and Intention (which, as was said, necessarily goes along with it in the superiour part which only is Spiritual,) remains altogether pure and untainted. Let then the Soul, which finds little gust in Prayer, continue in the posture and circumstance of praying, especially if the prayer be Obligatory; and in the material exercise of it, at least vocally, if she can do no more. Two comforts will ensue hence; one, that the merit of such prayer is secure; every Act of bearing up against this dryness, and the sloth to which it tempts, being manifestly an adhesion or clinging to God with the superior part of the Soul. The other is, that the gain made by such continuance, though it seem *small*, comes in *clear*; there being nothing to be defalkt from its purity by the mixture of any motive sprung from *matter* or Body; whereas generally in good actions, per-

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form'd by the middle sort of Christians, there goes so much out to the inferior part, that is, to Fancy and Appetite, that when the Chaff comes to be winnowed from the pure Corn, there remains not so many grains of *Spirit* as some apprehend. 'Tis very well if they escape with the Abatement of half. And, after all, the harvest of the former sort does but only *seem* small, for in truth 'tis otherwise: since of necessity the Habit of adhering to God, must be got by a frequent repetition of Acts; so that the soul, which faithfully continues to struggle against the difficulties of Prayer, cannot fail at last to come to a facility of it; so much the more to be valued and endeavour'd, by how much it is free from all suspicion of alloy from the inferior part; being manifestly wrought out by the strength and predominancy of the Superior.

§. 6. There is yet another comfort

fort in this constancy and resolution, which is, that the not deserting our devotions for want of sensible content, but going steadily on whatever we feel, is an evident testimony or argument to the soul that she is as she ought to be. For, since she cannot act this to please *Nature*, to whose grain it lies so cross, it must of necessity proceed from a motive *above Nature*, that is, a firm will and hearty desire to please God. The knowledg of which must needs increase *Hope*; and, if it be well laid to heart, will, in despite of the Dryness, and the Scruples apt to ensue upon it, produce that fruit of the Holy Ghost, which is called *Spiritual Joy*, and such a solid *Peace* of mind as the World cannot give.

§. 7. A Soul which needs more helps in this kind, may make use of some Preparation to Prayer; such as may be most efficacious to fix

her attention, and keep her Fancy from wandering, To which purpose she may a litle reflect upon the importance of it; and remember, That Happiness or Misery, and this for all Eternity, depends upon the disposition which she carries with her out of this life; and that disposition on Prayer, which is the means to procure it: That so much time is allotted to every one to work out his Salvation, as every one lives, and no more; And that this time mispent can never be recalled: That the rest of our life is only to fit us to pray well; and, if the time of Prayer be fruitless, our whole life is fruitless and irrecoverably Lost: That we cannot be disposed for Heaven without Time, and the time of Prayer is that wherein alone it can be expected this disposition should be wrought; wherefore, if this time be lost, at what other time can we hope to do that, which if it be

be not done, we are miserable, and yet cannot be done but at some time, &c. These and the like reflexions, such as we find most apt to work upon us, may contribute much to the well performance of Prayer.

§. 8. Freedom of Spirit is another great help in this case; Distractedness for the most part proceeding from worldly matters, which our too great concern in them is perpetually suggesting to our thoughts. He that can contrive himself into circumstances, which free him from having any thing to do with the World, more then to make use of the means it affords him to gain Heaven, is in the happiest condition, and likely to find least disturbance in Prayer. He that cannot free himself from business, let him free himself from all unnecessary concerns for it; and settle this judgment firmly in his Soul, That reason permits him not to be farther con-

cern'd for worldly affairs, let their importance be what it will, than as they depend on him. That success is out of his power, and depends not on him but Providence, to which he should contentedly resign it, and must whether he be content or no: That his part, and all the share he has in any Action, is to use his endeavours according to the best of his skill. That when he has allotted the time which is necessary for this, and imploy'd it as well as he can, he has done all he has to do or can do in these matters; and ought to be concern'd no farther; but is now at liberty to employ the time allotted for Prayer in the Best manner. Likewise, That there is no business which takes up so much time as not to leave sufficient for Prayer, if negligence, more than business, do not hinder, and the like. But, above all, let him still remember that whatever other business he have or can

can have (and I do not except any; not love to Parents, care of Children, the strongest and most rational ties to the nearest and most dearest Relations; nay the pursuit of things most necessary, even of Livelyhood, of Cloths and Meat) is of no importance in comparison of this: If this succeed not he is undone, and that Eternally, however he thrive in others; And if this succeed, no miscarriage in any or all the rest can hinder him from being Eternally Happy. He that lives gloriously, and with full Satisfaction of all his desires, is wretched, if he go at last into Hell; and, after his short dream of Happiness, wake into a horrid and never ending real misery: And he who lives despised and scorn'd, and dyes starved with cold or hunger, is happy if he go to heaven, and find his short and now ended sufferings swallowed up in infinite Bliss. So that, in truth, to

amuse our selves with what happens in this life, to the prejudice of what is to come hereafter, is a folly infinitely more senseless, then what we can fancy most ridiculous.

§. 9. This Freedom of Spirit is a Disposition so highly conducive to Devotion, that it ought to be preserv'd even in the immediate means to it, I mean in our Prayers and reading devout Books; in case they be not obligatory, or that, after a deliberate consideration, with the assistance and advice of our Spiritual Director, it appears not that we have already made choice of the best, and see that others are improper or less beneficial. For there are many good Souls so strangely fixt by a habituated Custom of saying such and such Prayers, that they fall into Scruples if upon occasion they hap to omit or change them; and yet let them examin their own thoughts to the bottom, they can discover no reason
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son or ground of such a Scruple, but the awkwardness of breaking a long-inur'd Custom. And to such persons it seems very advisable in my judgment, that they omit them in very good occasions or with good advice change them; that so, freeing themselves thus from the tyrannous slavery of Custome and the biggottery of irrational fears, they may inure themselves still to follow Right Reason in what they do, and no other motives of which they can give no account; which is indeed to assert and preserve the just Liberty of Spirit, due by the Laws of Nature and Grace, where no contrary Duty or Obligation does restrain it.

§. 10. There are divers reasons why we should not always use the same Prayers, and run still in one track. One is, because a perpetual custom hinders our attention to the sense and due penetration of the words,

in which chiefly consists the *Fruit*, or spiritual *advance* by Prayer. Another is the irrational scruple (as was said) of leaving off what meer Custom has addicted one to, which is a fault or imperfection, and so ought to be amended. A third, because it is not to be expected, in this state, that our Spirit should be always in one humour or disposition; and 'tis best that every thing be wrought upon according as it is dispos'd to have the Effect produc't in it. A fourth, and principal reason is, because our Soul every day grows or should grow in spirituality, at least at every competent distance, season or stage of our Lives Race, she must needs, by the very practise of a vertuous Christian Life, have gain'd a considerable advance, though perhaps she discern it not, especially while 'tis growing; and 'tis as irrational to think the same thoughts are apt to fit her in all states, as to think
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think that our Bodies ought always to be fed with Milk, because we eat nothing else when we were Infants. I for my part know no one Devotion suiting all sorts, all states, all times and every pitch, but that which was made by the Wisdom of the Eternal Father, who fully comprehended them all; I mean the *Lords Prayer*.

§. II. But, the best help of all, is a good Director. For as, in the Body, the same diseases proceed sometimes from different causes, and require different ways of cure; so it is in the Mind too. It may happen that the same indisposition, which in some proceed from the Imperfection of Nature, may be caused by the Perfection of Nature in others. A Soul fitted for higher Operations than these in which she is imploy'd, and straining at them by a natural propension, and yet not reaching them for want of Instruction
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may fall into the same unsatisfactory condition, which happens to other Souls from other causes. A good Director is as necessary in such cases, as a good Doctor where diseases spring from not usual and not easily perceived causes. However, our conduct is sure to be so much the wiser, as he has more Wisdom than our selves. In this particular, there are but two things to be observed: to chuse one who is truly fit, and then to treat freely with him. They are both of great importance, but need not be farther dilated.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

**Of the two chief kinds
of Devotion.**

§. I. **B**Ecause Devotion is a steady bent of the Will to Spiritual Operations, and there be two ways by which the Will may come to this disposition, those two different Methods make two sorts or Kinds of Devotion. For the Will may be wrought to this temper, either by a Habit got, as other Habits are, meerly by a frequent Repetition of her own Acts; or by the interposition of the Understanding; which, clearly seeing that such or such things are to be done, presses and prevails upon the Will to be always ready to do them. These ways are both efficacious, but the later the more Natural and less changeable. For, the will according

ding to the designe of nature, is to be led by the Understanding, and indeed, in some sence, cannot be led otherwise; there being some co-operation of the Understanding to that first Act of the Will, the repetition of which, afterwards, produces the Habit. For, unless the action had first been thought fit to be done, it would not have been done at all. But, if the Understanding contributed but litle, 'tis more chance and luck than Reason, that the Action haps to be good: which is not connatural, our nature requiring a *rational* proceeding in all things. Again, it is also less lasting: for, as *Use* produces, *Disuse* will lose it; and, should the Understanding (as, not being first settled it self, it well may,) come to cross the operations of the Will by contrary judgments or even doubts, the Will would waver, and act faintly first, and after perhaps not

not at all. But, a Will produced by the Understanding, clearly seeing, and conceiving practically what is to be done; and out of that sight moving, and indeed becoming the Will to do it, cannot be changed till the Understanding change. And, if the Understanding be determin'd by Truth, and that Truth clearly seen; the Understanding cannot change, because Truth can never turn into not-Truth: I say clearly seen; For Passion dims or blinds, and so comes in Sin.

§. 2. We shall find that, in one way, the Soul works upon the Body; in the other, the Body works upon the Soul. Where the Habit is produced by repeated Acts, it is caused in the Soul by the influence of the Body; whose Spirits and Organs, being fitted by constant use, and readily concurring to such Actions, carry the soul along with them. In the other way, the Action
begins

begins from the Soul; by whose predominance over the Body those Spirits and Organs are fitted, and concur with readiness and ease to her Directions, yet both arrive at the same End a fitting disposition both of Soul and Body.

§. 3. Notwithstanding, since Effects must needs partake the nature of their Causes, though true Devotion be an effect of both ways, yet this Effect cannot but have Consequences and Operations, as different as the Causes are which produce it. The Devotion caus'd by Knowledge is proper for more refined Souls, such as are able to penetrate into, and judg of the nature of things, and guide their Actions by their judgments: The other, for tempers less rational, and who, not able to go alone, require to be led: The former can only be lost by a wilful neglect of cultivating those Principles which caus'd it; and which are
not

not soon nor easily pluckt up, where once they have taken deep root: The other perishes, both sooner and more easily, by bare dis-use of the material actions by which it was produc'd: And, indeed, they who have only custom from whence they can derive their Devotion, generally run great hazard of a total decay in virtue, upon any considerable neglect of their customary Exercises.

§. 4. Yet in some respects, this Material Way is less subject to Involuntary distraction in Prayer, than the other; because this way of Prayer, being, in a manner, confused, and an Elevation of the Mind to God in common, as it were, without distinct application of the soul to particular Motives, which should advance her to new degrees of fervency; it costs her, by consequence, little labour, and obliges her not, out of weariness, to divert

vert to new Objects. Again, this kind of Prayer, having little or no height of Spirituality, but being futable to Fancy, finds in the Brain Proper *Species*, agreeable to the thoughts he has who Prays; whereas the other, straining after Objects purely spiritual, of which we have no proper *Species*, has by consequence less ground in Nature to fix the Attention.

§. 5. In some respects too, the Spiritual Way has the advantage in this point of Distraction. For, the distinct considerations to which the soul applies her self are apt, from their being *Distinct*, to fix the Attention; because they afford her a particular Entertainment to which she may attend. As for Weariness, when she finds that prevail and render her unfit to continue her Prayer longer, she leaves it off for the present, to resume it when she is better dispos'd: And, when some
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use has provided her of Spirits fit for her purpose, she will seldom have cause to break off for weariness, but may Pray with ease as long as is necessary or useful.

§. 6. Hitherto we have discours'd of these two kinds of Devotion as they are in their own nature. If we upon look them as they are in the Subject, we shall find those of the material way generally great valuers of External Acts: They place all Spiritual Goodness in frequenting them; think them Saints who are addicted to long Prayers, and assiduously repairing to Churches, and Sacraments; proceeding too often to censure those as little less than voyd of all goodness, whom they observe not to be still at their Beads or the like. And this proceeds not from defect in Devotion, (on the contrary, it seldom happens but where it is strong
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and much valu'd), but from the weakness of the person who has it; and who, being neither us'd (nor able) to judge of the nature of things, comprehends not how he can be Devout, who does not do those Actions continually, which by Experience he finds useful and necessary to Devotion in himself. Those of the other Way, place all their Treasure in Interior Dispositions; and, for Outward Actions, chuse them by Judgment; and practice so many and such as they find useful to the Inward Affections. They think persons more or less Saints, as their Souls possess more or less of those true Spiritual Riches: and hence value and endeavour so to improve their minds in the Knowledg of Spiritual things, as being the connatural means to produce good Affections; which the others fancy not, but rather condemn as a hinderance to Devotion,

tion, because they perceive no efficacy nor fruit of it in themselves.

§. 7. The former, placing much of their Devotion in performance of the External Act, as going often to Confession, Communion, &c. are not generally altogether so solicitous of due Preparation, or at least aim not by their preparation to work their souls into a disposition fit to advance in true Vertue and perfection of the Interior by a connatural efficacy of the Action upon such a disposition; but, following Faith unexplicated by true Theology, expect the fruit from a supernatural operation of Grace, beyond their comprehension fixt to, and accompanying the Action. The later, apprehending the benefit to be expected from those Actions depends, after a connatural way, upon the disposition with which they are done, are as much solicitous about the

the Disposition as the Action; and labour more to perform them *well* than *often*, (unless their spiritual Director judg them fit for both): but always with a Preparation, suitable to the Reverence due to institutes so Sacred and Divine. Those, being altogether affected to *many*, and those the most Customary Prayers, often flubber them over; sometimes with so litle application of the mind; that there is not so much as a becoming Reverence in the posture of the Body. They litle heed the sence as they go along, and consider not how or how far it affects their souls; and, wanting that which is the proper Rule to direct their choice, if chance dispose not otherwise, generally make use of such as they see us'd by others: apprehending some great matter in the very words; and, for that reason, chusing somtimes Latin Prayers, though they understand not one

one word of the Language. And yet, by the proportion this way has to their Pitch of Soul, this conceit of some great thing in common, concurs so well with their right-set intentions, that they pray very well, & better than where they understand more and conceipt less. The other sort, being knowingly devout, or *Spirituall*, (who, as St. Paul says, *Omnia dijudicant*, discern or distinguish all things) and, holding themselves at liberty, where God or his Church has layd no command, take for their Rule the Good of their Souls, and believe this Good to consist in a Right Disposition. They therefore chuse such Prayers and Books, as they find by experience most useful to this purpose, and contain such Motives as are most Efficacious to raise their Souls to Heaven. They are no ways affected to what they do not understand; and comprehend not
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how Ignorance, one of the chief curses of Original Sin, should ever be the Mother of Devotion. They are more for the *few* and *well*, than the *many* and *often* at a venture. They are always careful to accompany their Prayers with a grave and reverent gesture, and an attention piercing into (as far as they are able) and distinctly penetrating the force of the Words; which they expect should contain such an Affective sence, as is apt to wing their Souls for Heaven.

§. 8. The former too are more addicted to *Corporal*, the later to *Spiritual Works of Mercy*: and, as those fancy no great matter in the advancing of *Truth*, supposing we have once *Faith*; so these see no advantage to the world, in relieving any necessity incident to the Body, comparable to that of bettering mens Souls, which they see will follow from the advancing of *Truth*:

Truth: Solid Goodness being the genuin Off-spring of Solid Knowledge.

§. 9. Lastly, the difference of these two Spirits is great in Relation to comportment and human conversation. They whose study it is to guide themselves by Right Reason, the true Nature which God has given us, apply it to all their Actions; whence their carriage is even, their Friendship steady, their Judgment stay'd and just, their thoughts Charitable: They hearken to proposals with calmness and indifference, and believe, without good grounds, slowly: The others are more apt to be humorous; stiffly addicted to any opinion taken up of course; inconstant in their purposes and friendships; partial in their Verdicts; credulous even of Toyes, and of which no solid ground appears, if they suit their Fancy; unwilling to hear any Reason,

son, which Crosses the conceit they have once espous'd; And, for want of duly weighing the nature and reason of things, Rash Concluders; Censorious of every thing that runs not just in the track of their thoughts; and fierce Reprehenders of what they think amiss. And yet these imperfections, when they happen, hinder not a good meaning, and right-set intention. All this while they may heartily wish and love what's agreeable to Gods will, and hate whatever is contrary; only, by the shortness of their Reason, or untoward circumstances, they are preoccupied with a wrong conceit of their own way, and see not what is agreeable and what contrary to the Will of God; And so afford those of the other sort a fair Occasion of Exercising a double Charity, in bearing with their Imperfections, and, by sweet ways, instructing their Ignorance. §. 10.

§. 10. But, we must not think that these two sorts of Devout people are found in the World, fixt in an indivisible point, as they seem here described. I fear there are not very many perfectly of the one kind, and hope there are not very many just of the other. I only intended to describe the standards of these two Spirits: which are participated with a thousand unequal degrees, now of the one, now of the other sort, and interwoven with a variety almost infinite; according as natural Genius, Instruction, and other circumstances have allotted their proportions.

§. 11. Let be it our task *amulari charismata meliora*, with a true Christian Ambition, to aim at what's best and highest; but yet remember too, that what's best in it self is not always best for every particular: and resolve, upon bet-

ter advise than our own, to pursue the *Unum necessarium*, that way which is most expedient for our Souls. The truth is, these Methods, as different as they are, may both be needful almost for every one. Few or no understandings are so sublime, as not to admit, and even need, the assistance of frequenting outward Acts, which beget Habits: And few so low, as may not be improv'd to contribute, and that considerably, to the benefit of the material way, if good Instruction be not wanting. Wherefore, neither should the Intelligent Devote neglect the constant use of outward Acts of Devotion; nor the Material one, to improve his outward exercises, by joyn^g as much Understanding to them as he can.

SECT.

SECT. V.

**Of the means to attain
Devotion.**

THe means of attaining both sorts of Devotion are already toucht in Common; but the subject deserves to be treated more particularly. In the Material way, because the effect is wrought in the Soul by impressions first made on the Body, that which imports is, that these Impressions be as strong as may be, and as many; for, a weak cause often apply'd, will produce the effect of a strong one. Such exercises therefore are to be preferr'd, as strike the inward sense and fancy most strongly: but, whatever they are, they will become

Efficacious, if they be often enough repeated. Those therefore for whom this way is proper should be exhorted to be assiduous in the outward exercises of Devotion, whatever they be; yet with this caution, that the Frequency prejudice not their Efficacy: For, if they become so customary as to be done merely out of custome, they will loose much of their force. Particular care is to be taken in this point, about those Exercises which require an extraordinary Reverence, and, by the design of the Divine Institutor, carry with them an awe and respect; as the Sacraments, &c. For if, according to the Maxim, *Consuetudo vilescunt*, Customary things grow vile, our too frequent use of them, bring us to a careless indifference in performing them, and take off our conceit of them; they will become little beneficial, and perhaps harmful.

§. 2. But, these inconvenientes avoyded, these Devotes are to be advised to pray as often and as long as they can, and such prayers as they please; To frequent the Sacraments, the oftner the better, so it be with serious preparations, and such as may preserve the Reverence due to them; To be present at all Solemnities of the Church, and there where things are performed with most Majesty and becomingness; If any Extraordinary Occasion of Devotion happen, as in Jubilees and the like, by all means to lay hold of it; Often to read good Books, of which the Affective are more for their purpose than the Instructive; and, in a word, to omit nothing proper to strengthen and increase the Habit of Devotion. In general, the conceit they frame in common and confusedly, of the Benefit of these things, should be kept up at the

height, and Increas'd if it may be: and, for particulars, because they penetrate not into the nature of things, nor consider which way they work, it matters not much what they be, so they be good, and apt to move them. For this Reason, and because they are through their weakness easily scandaliz'd; people should in charity be wary of maintaining and even discovering contrary sentiments before them: For, these ways, whatever they be in themselves, the best or no, are best for them, and will make them Saints, if they pursue them sincerely and faithfully: and we must beware, *Nè pereat in scientiâ tuâ infirmus frater, Lest a weak Brother perish by thy Knowledg.*

§. 3. The way of *Knowledg* must needs be pursu'd by such means as improve *Knowledg*; and he advances in it best, who most deeply penetrates into *Christian*

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Duties, and most clearly sees their agreeableness to right Reason. I do not mean with such a sight as is merely speculative; nor such a sight as can pierce into the Mysteries themselves, and look upon them with that kind of Evidence which we have of other Truths, whose terms we see connected: For this would take away Faith, and is impossible here; and only to be hoped in the Country of Blissful light, where we shall see Face to Face. But I mean such a sight as presupposes Faith, and renders it lively or operative; which if once we can attain, it is impossible not to be Devout: For, *knowledg* of any Good, when 'tis exprefs and lively, becomes a Principle of *act-ing* for it, or to obtain it; that is, *Will*: as by reflexion we may easily discover in the whole course of our lives, and experience of our daily Actions.

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§. 4. Now

§. 4. Now, this Knowledge is renderd *express*, and Faith by consequence *lively*, two manner of ways: By Supernatural, and by Natural means. Supernatural means, are either apt to affect all Mankind; or some *few* chosen by God's providence, and design'd and fitted for great ends. Of the first sort are Miracles in general: For the common course of Nature is practically evident to all; and so, whatever evidently crosses it, must needs be conceiv'd to spring from the Author of Nature, who can control it as he pleases. Wherefore, as, on the one side, this evidence makes it stick firmly in the soul, that God has a hand in it; so, on the other side, the Astonishment, by reason of the Unusualness of the effect, makes it sink deep; and both together render Faith, as to the point it testifies, exceeding lively and prompt
to

to Action. Of the other sort are the rushing Wind, the fiery Tongues, and other concomitant causes, which produc't that prodigious liveliness of Faith and sublime height of ardent Devotion in the first Planters of the Church: by which they were render'd so strongly and readily dispos'd for those duties which Christ had order'd them, that they cheerfully embrac'd all Inconveniencies, Torments, nay Death it self, to perform them. These causes were not apt to affect all Mankind, as they did those few, particularly fitted by long conversation with Christ himself, and expectation of the effects of the Promise he made them at his departure; which was still working in their minds, and raising them to look for some strange Supernatural effect of it. These are the two manners of External and more ordinary supernatural means: for,
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of the Inward workings of God's Spirit, *which blows where it lists*; and whose Operation, and the Circumstances of it, depend upon a *Series* of causes unknowable by us, 'tis not my Intention to speak in this Discourse.

§. 5. Natural and Ordinary means, to make this Knowledge express, and Faith lively, are also two-fold, *viz.* penetrating well, either the Grounds on which Faith is built, that is, the Certainty of the Authority which recommends it; or else, the Agreeableness of the things to be believed and of the Actions to be practis'd, to the Maxims of true Reason. It is the proper business of Controversy to teach the one, and Scholastick Divinity the other; and 'tis by reading, and attentively considering the discourses made by Masters in both kinds, that we may attain the Knowledge we desire in these matters:

matters. Only let us provide the Author, we chuse, be truly Solid (for every one who writes is not so); and that the Point we chuse be to our purpose. It is neither necessary always, nor convenient, that every one who is capable of Knowledge, should read all the Controversies that concern each point of Faith; even though they be good and solid: much less amuse himself with solving all Objections rais'd, and raisable without end, by Adversaries. It will be sufficient to peruse and understand one or two good Books, which solidly treat, and firmly establish the Grounds of Faith; or, if leisure and opportunity serve, to hear some Oral discourses of that subject: In fine, by any way we can, to weigh attentively the Nature of the Authority on which Faith is built, and what perfect Certainty the same, and less Authority begets in us on other

other Occasions. This done with that care and concern which the thing requires, it will naturally breed in a Soul, these and the like reflexions.

§. 6. I believe, and that with a most firm assurance, that there was a King *Henry 8th.* a *William the Conqueror*, a *Julius Caesar*; and many Actions perform'd by them, as altering Religion in *England*, Conquering this Nation, gaining many Victories, and the like. The same I believe of less men, and less universally-known Actions; provided they were sufficiently notorious to great Multitudes, and by these multitudes openly and seriously attested, and without any imaginable ground of suspicion of Fear or Hope, or any Interest which might move them to ly in the case. I find this writ in my heart in such characters, that I can as well doubt whither I am, as whither such things were. I find all Mankind
judge

judge the same; and I can no more think it possible, that Humor or Interest should beget this perswasion in them, than in my self; which I am sure it does not. 'Tis evident then, that Right Nature, or true Reason, obliges both them and me to assent that such things are true; and therefore that such an Authority, attesting such matters of Fact, cannot deceive us. Wherefore, by the same and far better Reason, I am to believe this vast Authority of the Church attesting to me, that such and such Doctrins were taught by Christ and his Apostles.

§. 7. Farther, considering the circumstances in which this Universal perswasion of Mankind that this doctrine is Divine was introduced, I find the Effect absolutely impossible to Nature. The men, who first began to work it, were inconsiderable in all respects of
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which the world takes notice: Of mean Birth, of mean Callings, Fisher-men, of no Power, no extraordinary natural Endowments; and, where there was a Primitive Christian, as there were many, famous for Parts or Quality, he must first be wrought upon by men inferior to himself in all such kind of respects. This was at a time when the whole world was possess'd with Idolatry, that is, utter Enemies to Christianity, excepting one poor Corner of it, *Judea*, where the Change began; and where those who remained unchanged were greater enemies to the business than the Heathens themselves. The temper of the World at this time, was so far from simple or foolish, that Wit was rather at the highest pitch; all the Learning of *Athens* and *Greece* being transfer'd to the *Romans*, and there improv'd and heighten'd. Yet *this World*, by
these

these men, in such circumstances, was prevail'd with, to cast off all their long-settled persuasions in Religion: and, instead of them, to entertain, and that with a most unshakable firmness, the belief of Mysteries *inconceivable*; such at which nature could not chuse but boggle extreamly, and not admit without absolute Conviction. For, no Interest could move them; all Preferments of Honour, or Trust, or Profit, were in the Hands of those who Opposed this New Doctrine: and to Embrace it, was to Forfeit whatever they Possess or hoped in this kind; nay, to change it for Poverty, and Contempt, and Torments, and Death. *Force* there neither was, nor could be: For, all Power was in those who were against Christianity; and was employ'd and strain'd to suppress it. In Learning and Wit, and Eloquence, and all Natural Parts, they

they had the Advantage; and the things propos'd to their Belief, a Trinity, a God made Man, and living in Obscurity, and dying in Torments and Infamy, a Virgin-Mother, &c. were Inconceivable, and to nature Unsolvable Riddles.

§. 8. He that shall consider these things, and the rest of what may occur, as they deserve, will be convinc'd that the Effect, *viz.* a Perswasion of such Multitudes of Men, so qualify'd, to believe such strange things, so strongly that no Hopes or Fears could hinder them from standing firmly to them, even to Death, could not be compass'd by *Natural Causes*; and thence conclude with absolute certainty, the Doctrine could be no other than Divine, dictated by God the Author of Nature, and, by his Power over it, introduc't and settled in the World.

§. 9. Again,

§. 9. Again, amongst other Supernatural means, Miracles being one, which the Christian party unanimously pretend to have been done by Christ and his Apostles: 'Tis impossible had they been false they should not have been discover'd, and the Pretenders and Actors manifestly shown to be a company of Cheats, unless there wanted Wit, or Power, or Will in the Opposit Party to examin and detect them; For, that which we *know how* to do, and *can*, and *will do*, manifestly *is done*. Wit to detect them there was in abundance, the world being then both acute, and withall Sceptical; a quality, too, which hindered them from believing rashly. *Will* there wanted not: The Honor and Interest of all Overseers of Religion, or Priests, both Jews and Gentiles, engaging them against it; and the Civill Policy being highly concern'd

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to look to Innovations, and Doctrins contrary to the Religion in vogue, and Establish'd among them. Besides, 'tis plain they had a *Will to do* what they *did*, and they *did* make all the Opposition they could. Neither was there any want of *Power*; which, till *Constantin's* time, three hundred years after Christ, was all, (whether Secular or Religious,) in the hands of the Enemies of Christianity; and often fruitlessly imploy'd to the uttermost, both by Policy and Persecution, to root it out. There was no possibility of over-bearing them by Noise (for that is one kind of Power) and silencing those who cry'd down the Miracles, by the louder Clamours of greater multitudes who cry'd them up. For, though Christianity had made a considerable progress in the world during the times of persecution, yet, in comparison of Heathens, Christians were but few,
and

and very unable to contend with them in noise. It remains then, that the pretended Miracles were *true* Miracles, and too evidently such for any Wit or Power of man to show them otherwise: And that those and the other means, used in the conversion of the world, were truly *above Nature*; since they overcame all Human and Natural means conspiring and bent to oppose them. And, had they not been such, the persuasion, nay steadfast belief, of such incomprehensible Mysteries, and standing fast against such a violent Torrent, nay turning the stream so strangely, and prevailing on such vast Portions of the World to embrace Christianity, would be an Effect without a Cause, or (which is all one) without a *proportionable* Cause, or a Cause able to produce it. Wherefore, as Certain as it is, that no Effect can be produc't without a Cause, and that
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a Proportionable cause, or a Cause *able to produce it*, (and that is so certain, that to deny it, is to affirm manifest Contradiction, *viz.* that *a thing can do what it cannot do*;) so sure it is, that this first-taught Doctrin was both truly Divine, and rightly deriv'd from the Primitive times to us. Therefore I am as sure as I live my Faith is *True*, and the Doctrin I believe, Reveal'd to Mankind by God himself.

§. 10. Hence a rationally-pious Soul will discourse on this or the like manner: When I certainly know any thing that really and highly concerns me, for example, that such a precipice, if I leap into it, will certainly kill me, such an Action will certainly ruin my estate, such another will secure it, and settle me in Plenty, & Content, and Security; 'tis plain Madness not to act according to this Knowledg, and be-

beware of that precipice, and avoyd one Action, and do the other: But it is infinitely *greater* madness not to avoyd such things as my Faith, with much greater certainty, assures me will bring upon me infinitely greater *Milchiefs*; and not lay hold of such things as it likewise assures me will put me into possession of infinitely greater Goods, no less than true, and perfect, and never Ending Happiness: I will therefore endeavour by the best, and all means I possibly can, to avoyd Sin, correct my Passions and Inordinate Love of this World, strengthen and advance my Reason, elevate my mind to God, and strain with the utmost force of my Soul after this state of Bliss, which is alone Desirable, alone Considerable, &c. And this with a steady and devout pursuit; keeping ever awake in my mind, when it grows drowsy, the Absolute

lute Certainty of what my Faith, propos'd and attested to me by the Church, delivers to me. Thus we see how *Faith is the Argument of things not yet seen*, to wit, by the clearness of its Principles or Grounds; Likewise, how 'tis the *Substance of things to be hoped*, by the Firmness of its own Foundations; Lastly, how it is the Ground-work of all Devotion, because the consideration of its Truth, render'd express to our thoughts, makes Faith it self very lively and Operative, that is, our Judgments concerning the *Truth* of it, very *Practical* and *Ready for Christian Action*; in which, that disposition of the Soul, which we call Devotion, formally consists. To proceed thus far, and settle their Judgments in these Truths with the steadiest firmness and clearest sight they can, is advisable for those Souls, whose pitch of Reason makes them In-
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quisitive into the Grounds of things, and capable to comprehend them; for such persons will receive much comfort and profit by such kind of satisfactions. It imports not which way they take to this end; whether they work it out by their own meditations, or use the assistance of Books, or publick or private and Familiar Discourses: So the business be done, it matters not how.

§. 11. If any particular difficulty which strikes at the very Ground of their Beleeif comes cross their thoughts, and hazards in the least to shock their Judgment, it may be worth their pains sometimes to see through that too: But, to amuse themselves with every Objection, and not to be quiet till they themselves can answer every thing which is or may be oppos'd, I take to be a very unprofitable, and very unsatisfiable curiosity. The

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difficulty may sometimes be such as cannot be solved, without a deep insight into many Sciences, such as they neither have, nor can hope to have for want of leisure or parts. Again, Objections are endless, and should we not be satisfi'd of a Truth, till all that can be said against it were answer'd, we should never be satisfy'd of any Truth at all, but onely of the very first Principles. Should all the Objections, yet ever thought of from the beginning of the World, be answer'd to day; as many more might be invented to morrow. For Wit and Fancy have no bounds; and 'tis from the fertility of their Inventions that Objecting proceeds. And, after all, 'tis not the proper business of Devotes; it belongs to Controvertists to answer Objections: the only thing which imports Devout people of this pitch, is to understand well, that the Grounds
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on which they proceed in the conduct of their Lives, are firm and solid: and such as they ought securely, and without fear of deceit, rely on. Which done, they must be true to themselves, and act with a vigour proportionable to that degree of cleerness with which their Speculativeness discerns them to be true, joyn'd with such a Concern as Faith tells us the matter deserves. Nor need they distrust Gods Providence in this, which has furnisht his Church with means suitable to every capacity.

§. 12. Again, when upon certain Grounds they have given Admittance to a Truth, they should stand to it, and trouble themselves no more: For nothing in the World is or can be more certain than that if this be *True*, whatever is or can be said against it is *not True*, whether I be able to make so much out or no. And

upon this they may securely rest. In truth this wavering Inconstancy, this quivering Irresolution, which keeps us from owning heartily what we do see, for fear of what we do not see, is a blamable weakness; loses the time, in which we should work out our Salvation, upon Doubts and Scruples, and puts us into the condition, which *St. Paul* reprehends in the women of his time, *Semper discentes, & nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes. Always Learning, & never coming to the knowledge of truth.*

§. 13. Since then, a knowing devout soul seeks only, or only should seek, so much knowledg, as is necessary to the perfection of Devotion; let her if she be able, faithfully, and severely pursue her inquiry, till she arrive at such a certainty of those Truths which concern her; I mean such as will give solid Ground for Virtuous Christian Life: and, for the

the rest, remain satisfy'd with this, that there must of necessity be some deceit in whatever is said against Truth. Let her a God's Name first discover that to be Truth which she embraces, as Truth; to which 'tis sufficient to judge upon good Grounds, the Church is Infallible. But after this, it is lost time if she spend any in the discovery of the deceit. It is enough she knows it is Deceit, and needs not know what kind of one it is. In our particular Case, she may reflect, that the Testimony of the Church or *Tradition*, being the ground on which we build the certainty of Faith, as 'tis Christian (which onely in a manner amongst us is called in question) they who deny the force of Tradition, must by consequence deny the certainty of any matter of Fact done before our Days: And, because Nature assures us, that

this is Irrational, it assures us likewise, that who object on this manner go against nature, and so all they can say, is no other than witty talk, handsom flourishes, and plausible quibbling, without real force or solid ground. And, indeed, they plainly discover themselves irrational, and led by passion, who obstinately oppose Tradition; because they maintain an evident Contradiction. For, on the one side they affirm that Faith is truly certain; and on the other, deny Faith has any Grounds truly Certain: And this (since nothing can be said certain, but in vertue of the Proofs or Grounds by which the Certainty is made out) is to say, that Faith is and is not truly Certain. To this they are forc't by the heat of Opposition; For they will not grant Tradition has the vertue to make a thing truly certain, because they are aware it is against them:
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And, by denying it, they leave no truly certain Grounds for Faith at all. For, as all proof of matters of Fact past long ago must at last depend on Testimony, or Tradition; if Tradition it self be not secure, nothing can be so which depends on it. And so there is no remedy, but they must speak out at last, and say plainly, as they do, that all grounds of Faith, and consequently Faith it self, may possibly be false.

§. 14 I would not be mistaken here to advise any they should not beleeve till they have this Evidence of the Grounds of Faith; but I presuppose them already Faithful and intend only to comfort their Faith by looking into it's Grounds: Every one that is convinc't, whether upon solid or sleightest Grounds, God has said a thing, is bound to beleeve it, else he sins mortally in disbelieving God who is Essential Truth. Much less do I absolutely

require this of them; but, upon supposition that their own speculative and acute *Genius* makes themselves require it, I exhort them to it as to that which is to such Souls a means to increase their Devotion, and can no way shock them if they be not passionate and precipitate. Least of all do I tell them that in looking into their Grounds they ought to go to work like Doubters or Seekers; but, quite contrary, supposing them firm in Faith by their relying on the sure Rock of the Church, and strengthen'd in that reliance by the Practical Evidence that the Virtues she exhorts us to are agreeable to Right Practical Reason or Conscience, and that the means she proposes and enjoins to attain them are Effectually towards that End, I bid them rest secure, that if God, together with an earnest desire to advance in Devotion, have also
given

given them a piercing Eye to discern Truth (as he has to many many thousands in the vast Extent of the Church) God's Goodness has provided such Grounds proportion'd, and penetrable by every Capacity, and theirs amongst the rest, as will, if look't into, render their Faith more lively, and their Devotion more fervent and Solid. But, who is of this pitch, and so to make use of this method, lest the over-weening of their own private and perhaps partial Fancies should make them strain beyond their force, is left to the judgment of Spiritual Directors, whom we are to suppose fitted by Education, as well as design'd by Office to be the proper Discerners of Spirits, and knowing when to administer St. *Paul's* Milk and solid Food according to the capacity of the Souls they are to nourish in Devotion. For those *perfecti*

were already Faithful: the reason then of his discoursing *wisely* with them, was (their pitch bearing it) to make their Faith lively, and their Vertue more solid; and to enable them also to convert others to Faith, and advance them in Vertue or Devotion.

§. 15. The bottom-ground of all Devotion being thus layd in the Establishment of Faith, many other Comfortable Lights will break out, and cherish and strengthen the liveliness of it in such persons as we have spoken of, and to a great degree in others also. Such are the considerations, What wise Orders for a World the *Ten Commandments* are; What Universal Mischiefs would succeed if any of them were omitted; and how the well-being of Mankind, both as to *this* life and the *next*, is pithily compriz'd in these few Heads: which as it argues an infinitely-

finitely-wise Contriver, comprehending and providing for the Necessities of Human Nature, so it likewise becomes an Infinite Goodness, commanding his poor and indigent Creatures nothing but what is their own true Good, and tends to bring them to compleat Happiness.

§. 16. Next, the Consideration how conformable the more elevated Points of Faith are to Right Reason, exceedingly comforts an Understanding captivating it self to the Obedience of Faith. For, as on the one side, nothing is more rational, than that those highest Truths, which Elevate us to Heaven, should be placed above the pitch and endeavours of Nature, and so not to be knowable by Principles purely Natural: So likewise Truths, by being Truths, and proceeding all from the Author of Truth, must needs be ally'd

ly'd one to another, and bear some resemblance and proportion together; those *above Nature and Reason*, to those discoverable this way; although they cannot be proved by them, but depend on Gods Authority revealing and the Churches proposing them. These things are found in the books of *Divines*; of which such would be chosen as serve best to perform the duty of Divines, and shew the conformity of Religion to Reason most clearly. For, those which, with great shew of Wit and Learning, only dispute matters plausibly on both sides, are not proper for this purpose. Who understands not Latin, or, though he do, is perhaps to seek in those Terms in which Schoolmen usually express themselves, should make use of some good Divine; who may select such points as are most proper for the Person with whom he

he deals, and deliver them in terms which may be intelligible to him.

§. 17. Besides these Books & Discourses, which increase Devotion in intelligent Souls by enlightning their Understanding, there are others which work immediately on the Will, of them as well as of others, by the way of Affections without the help of Reason. And, though these are perhaps more proper for the *other* way of Devotion, yet no assistance should be neglected; and they are very compatible with this, and no less, if not more, Efficacious. For, being made up of Expressions coming from a mind full of, and overflowing with Devout Thoughts, they are apt to transfuse, as it were Affections into the Soul of the Reader: And, if that Reader be beforehand satisfi'd in the Principles which ground those Affections, he
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is excellently disposed to receive them. Those Principles then being habitually possess'd by the Readers, they will experience their Wills inflam'd by the ardent Love, which those Expressions breath; in the same manner as Lively Expressions of any Passion beget the same passion in another, especially if possess'd with the same Concern which was to both the Ground of those Passions. Hence they find such Books full of *Spirit*, and as it were of *Sap*, connaturally nourishing and dilating their Souls; which others, not thoroughly satisfi'd of those Principles, coucht underneath as their Foundation, find sapless and disrelishing: Though yet, sometimes it happens otherwise, and that without any fault or defect.

§. 18. But generally such expressions are like meat already chaw'd, and needing nothing to become present-

presently nutritive, but a heart disposed by Affections of the same kind to receive it; as new drops of water, without more ado cling together, and increase the bulk. Of these, some are us'd for Prayer directly, others for Entertainment of the Mind with devout reading; but both work by the way of Affective Impressions. The best without all comparison are the *Psalms* of *David*: which some find relish more, when they are taken asunder, and then peec't of verses taken one here, another there, as seems most proper; and those obscure parts which darken the sence left out. Divers devout persons have laboured in this kind; and who would labour for himself perhaps would find it no unuseful employment. Besides these, I would commend *St. Austins Confessions*, some piece of *St. Bernard*, and *S. Bonaventure: The Imitation of Christ*;

Christ ; The Love of God by St. Francis Sales ; St. Teresa's Works and ejaculatory Prayers, The Sermons of of St. Thomas de villa nova, &c. But, the best books of Devotion are those of *Prayer*; and Prayer being an Elevation of the Mind to God; and the Mind consisting of Understanding and Will; those Prayers are the best which work on *both*, and at once *instruct* and *enlighten* the *Understanding* and *inflame* the *Will*. I would therefore advise to chuse such as contain solid Christian Doctrin, and express it both rationally and affectively. Of this kind of Prayers the number is not great; few being fitly qualifi'd to compose them. For, there is requisite in the Author, both skill in true Divinity, to make the conformity of Christian Doctrin to Reason appear, and ardent Devotion; he being very unlikely to warm another

ther who is cold himself; And besides a great mastery in Language, to chuse expressions clear and affective, and both easy. I recommend for this purpose, the meditations of *St. Augustin*; and the Devotions of our learned, Pious and judicious Country - Man, *Mr. John Austen* in the way of Offices.

§. 19. The Lives of Saints also are of great efficacy to stir up Devotion, by way of Imitation and Example. But they would be well writ, that is, with more care to relate their Heroick Vertues, which made them Saints and estimable and imitable by us, then to huddle multitude of Miraculous, and, if but slightly attested, incredible actions; which neither were the causes of their Sanctity, nor are imitable. They affect the Vulgar indeed with Admiration and Esteem; But work not so much upon

upon the wiser sort, who only seek their own Improvement, and how they may come to Vertue themselves; of which these things were no Cause, though they may be Signs. Yer, when they are duly attested, and accompany'd with the Saints Vertuous Life, they become a kind of Testimony to the Church, of God's particular favour to those who give themselves up to his Service; and an encouragement for others to serve so good a Master, who thus honours those that honour him. But, as I said, they ought to be well attested, lest the credulity of the vulgar, embracing so many uncertain stories for assured Truths, and the easiness of some Pastors in permitting them without distinction to be Printed, do not as much or more harm to those without the Church, as good to those within her. The best way is to chuse such
Lives

Lives as were written by Authors, who were also Saints themselves; and withal Learned and Prudent, and so less apt to be imposed upon by false Relations, or byast by Interest or Affection. Such as is the *Life of St. Francis*, by St. Bonaventure; *Of St. Hilarion and St. Paul the Hermite*, by St. Hierom; *of St. Anthony the Great* by St. Athanasius, and the like.

CHAP.



C H A P. II.

Of the Chief Act of Devotion,

P R A Y E R.

S E C T. I.

*Of the Nature of Prayer, and
its Excellency, as it includes
in it self the Exercise of all
Virtues.*

TH E First or Principal Act
of Devotion being *Prayer*,
it seems proper, that, in a Trea-
tise of *Devotion*, I should say some-
thing

thing more particularly of it's Nature, and excellencies than I have done hitherto; and thence enkindle in the Hearts of my Readers a great desire to frequent it. All which I cannot do without hinting at the same time the *best* Manner how to perform it: though it ought not to be expected, in so short a discourse as I intend, I should much enlarge my self, or descend to every particular manner of it.

§. 2. *Prayer* then, as was said, is defin'd an *Elevation or raising of the mind to God*: which being a kind of Action; and every Action, (as Philosophy tells us,) having two Terms or Ends, the one that *from* which the Action goes; the other that *to* which it tends; (as for Example, the Action of *Heating*, goes from Coldness, and tends to Heat) it follows that the benefit of Prayer must be rated from both these. It raises us to Heaven, and therefore
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it lifts us from *Earth*, its opposit or Antartick: That is, it sets us above that from whence our misery springs, and approaches us to that where all our Happiness is treasur'd up.

§. 3. Some ancient Heathens, such as *Diogenes*, seem'd to have attain'd the former, without the Help of Prayer; and to be great Contemners of the World. But, alas, they did but *seem* so, for all their mock-holy-day pretences: For, had they been indeed and truly rais'd *above Earth*, they must of force have been rais'd *towards Heaven*; that is, they must have been addicted to address themselves by Prayer to the true God; of which kind of Devotion their Earth-clogg'd minds were utterly ignorant: They were not then rais'd above their affections to *Earth*, but their whole pursuit was still the *World*, though under a different con-

consideration: They were above it, as it was able to give them Riches and Honorable Titles; but still deeply plung'd in it, as it gave them Esteem. Nay, far more deeply, even for this regard, that for this Esteem's sake, they condemn'd the other: For they thought it more Honorable to seem to condemn Riches and Dignities, then to seek them; and therefore aim'd at a greater worldly honour by refusing that which in their Apprehensions was a less. So that, the Progress of their vain and proud Souls was not an advance from Earthliness to Heavenliness; but a foolish leaving Earthly Riches and Dignities, to acquire an airy and perhaps a more empty Earthly Esteem and Admiration. Nay, they condemn'd the other *comparatively* only, that is, would have lov'd it, and perhaps heartily too, but that they doted more upon *this*: As
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the forenam'd Cynick trampled on *Plato's* Pride (as he call'd his gay cloths) with a greater Pride perhaps than *Plato* wore them. Of which kind of Contemners of the World, we have too many examples in *England*, amongst our deepest Fanaticks: With this difference, that their Pride is more spiritual, that is, *worse*; nay being a corruption of right Christianity, the *worst* of all that can be.

§. 4. Prayer then being the best means to elevate the mind from Earth to Heaven, or rather this very Elevation it self; and the best or readiest way to effect this, or raise our selves upwards, being Flying; it follows, that if we pursue the Metaphor, we must say the Soul has *wings*, by which she is enabl'd to take this *flight*, that is, her Thoughts and Affections: which how swift they are, and how far they

they reach at one View and Effort of the Soul, a little Reflexion will teach us. Moreover, she must move and stir these Wings, that is, *meditate* and *consider*; whence we experience, that those who are given to run over their private Prayers without considering what they say, are sluggishly indeed moving towards Heaven; for they cannot but think of it at times sleightly, and still intend well; but they seldom advance by it to any high pitch. They climb a little upward, by the help of Characters and Sounds; and the lame Activity of Fancy lifts them into the Air; where they see after a dusky manner far distant glances of Heaven; but scarce one constant Ray of true Light dawns, to allure and affect them strongly. Lastly, there must be a calm and clear *medium* to fly thorow, (such as is our Air in material Flights) not disturb'd with ruffling

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fling Passions, or clogg'd with clouds of Sorrow and worldly Cares. If such Whirl-winds and Tempests turmoil this *medium*, it will hazard to take the Soul off the Wing, and throw her head-long to the Earth. Wherefore, if we intend a Progress towards Heaven by Prayer, we must first prepare a cheerful and unpassionate disposition of the mind; *Ubi pax, ibi Spiritus sanctus*, Where there is Peace, the Gift of the Holy-Ghost, the Divine Giver himself is not far absent. At least there must be a steadiness in the Soul's superior part, or a full Intention to get rid of all these Passions. For, this laid first, Prayer it self will do the rest, as shall be seen hereafter.

§. 5. Another Excellency of Prayer, and consequently an Encouragement to pursue it, is that it includes in it self at once all Virtues; not after a sluggish manner, as they ly dormant as it were *habitually* in the

the Soul, but as they are consider'd in their *most actual* and *best* state: Which is as much as to say, that Prayer is the actual exercise of all virtues at once: For, it is known that those virtues we call morall, are not at all *meritorious*, and consequently not at all *virtues*, but as they partake of that Queen of virtues, *Charity*. Whosoever therefore has *Charity*, (and consequently the two other Theological virtues, *Faith* and *Hope*) has all the rest; whence it is said in the Scripture, that, *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*.

§. 6. But, that we may come to particulars. While we pray, we make use of the virtue of *Faith* in many regards; for we at once Exercise our Belief, that God is the Sovereign Giver of all Good, and Lord of all things; that He is infinitely Wise to see the bottom of our hearts laid open then before

him; Infinitely Powerfull to accomplish all we can possibly wish; Infinitely Good, to admit us into his presence; nay, to exhort and even command us to come to him; as also to bestow on us all that our condition and disposition can render us capable of; Infinitely Merciful to forgive all our sins as soon as ever we heartily repent, and humbly ask pardon. Again, by our profound Reverence, we acknowledge and exercise the belief of his incomparable Greatness and Majesty; By our Submission, and Resignation, of his wise Providence and Conduct of the World: Lastly, by our asking of him with due Humility, that he is our Great Creator, we his poor indigent Creatures, and meer Nothings of our selves: also, that he is our most liberal and bounteous Benefactor, Infinitely Rich to supply, and Overflowingly Communicative of himself,



self, to relieve all our Necessities, so we ask as we ought.

§. 7. Again, when we pray, we exercise our *Hope* that He will hear our Prayers, and grant all we ask, if we ask wisely and humbly; that he will keep the promise he has made us to that purpose; that he will Mercifully Pardon our sins, Protect us from dangers; and in a word, (as we use to phrase it,) that he will *hear all our Prayers*, which according to his wise Government of the World, ought to be seconded with Performance.

§. 8. Lastly, while we pray, we exercise the Virtue of Charity, as it signifies *Love of God*, by calling upon him and looking on him as a Father and the Fountain of all good; as endow'd with all those ravishing qualities which amongst us use to beget Love, such as are, Bounty, Kindness, Mercy, tender Compassion, Fidelity of word, Friendli-

ness, Pure Intellectual Light, infinit Beautifulnes to the eye of the mind: And, most of all, as he is our Chief and final, our Infinit and **Eternal Good**, and our onely Bliss, in whom our Soul must either for ever repose after all the fond toyes of the World we so dote on leave us, or else remain Eternally Miserable. Let us lay all this together, and then reflect how sublime an Excellency is found in Prayer, which at once exercises and interiorly Executes in the sight of God, all Virtues at once.

SECT.

SECT. II.

**Of the Excellency of
Prayer as tis the Ac-
tual Fulfilling all the
Commandments at
once.**

WHen the young man in the Gospel askt our Blessed Saviour, what he should do to have Eternal Life, his answer was, *keep the Commandments*: Now, if Prayer be (supposing it made as it ought) the keeping all the Commandments, nay, an actual exercising them all at once; then we may be bold to vary the Phrase of our Saviour's Words, without altering his sense, and to say, *If*

thou wilt have Eternal Life, apply thy self to Prayer. And this is another Excellency of Prayer, and a great one too, that every time we exercise it, we are exercising the fulfilling all the Commandments at once.

§. 2. To understand which we must consider, that no External Act is Meritorious or Demeritorious before God, but as it springs from Deliberate Will or *Intention*: and, though the Execution of God's Commands do exteriorly increase Merit too, yet it is because the Intention it self is better'd or strengthen'd habitually to some degree by the outward Exercise; or because, there being some Difficulty perhaps to be overcome in the performing the outward action: hence the Intention to do this, pursu'd resolutely to an actual Execution, is better then else it would have been, by the very conquering the

the difficulty; in the same sense as we may say, an intention to do a thing *notwithstanding any difficulty occurring*, is better than an intention *simply* to do it. Again, the outward action increases our Merit, because it begets a greater satisfaction and Hope in us, that our inward Intention was not a counterfeit one; for, the being conscious to our selves of having perform'd many such good Deeds, (especially if not done in the world's Eye, and therefore not for its sake, but for God's) will stand us in good stead at our last hour, and strengthen our Souls with *Hope* (and consequently with *Love* which always goes proportion'd to it) when we are to appear before our great Judg. But, abstracting from these cases, and speaking of outward Actions, without any regard or rapport to the Soul, they are purely *Local motions*, or meerly *Natural* not

Moral ones, and so have nothing to do with Merit or Demerit: Wherefore, putting an Intention to do any good, as resolutely bent to do it, and to overcome all difficulties that may occur, and to that degree of perfection as the other gains by extending it self to action; lastly, such as by reason of its heartiness and honest sincerity, with other circumstances, gains the same comfort to the Soul, as if it had been executed outwardly, 'tis equally Meritorious as the other. Inasmuch, that whosoever firmly and resolutely intends any good, so that nothing needs but an opportunity actually to put it in execution, does already execute it in his heart; and 'tis the same before God, as if he had perform'd it exteriorly, As is evident from our B. Saviours saying, that the poor Widow, when she gave a mite, gave more than all the Rich Vaunters: For, though
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in the Eye of the World it was not so much, yet it was full as much in the Eye of God; accepting it as such, because He saw her hearty good Intention was such, that, could she have done it, she would have given more than they all did.

§. 3. This being once settled, 'tis easily seen, that Prayer exercis'd as it ought, is in true Theology a keeping at once all the Commandments, and consequently the Commandments of the Church too, which are all involv'd in the Fourth. For who sees not that the First Commandment is nothing but an injunction to Faith, Hope, and Charity; as this last signifies *Love of God above all things*: As also to Sovereign Honour and profoundest Reverence, as they are peculiarly due to God. Likewise, that the Second is but an Extension of the Reverence due
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to Himself, to his *Name*; or a Conformity in Words and Conversation to the Esteem we ought to bear him in our Minds: And the Third, a Determination of a circumstance of Prayer, to which he that is given to Prayer must needs be easily conformable. And what cares he who is Exercising actually the Virtues, we shou'd before were all found in rightly made Prayer, and especially Love of Heaven above all things, what cares he, I say, for pretending to worldly Power greater than others, for resenting injuries, or for gaining worldly pleasures or profit, in which consist all those of the Second Table; whereas, if he be in Prayer, that is, if his mind be *Elevated to God*, and this frequently and fervently, he must needs despise in his Heart, nay be Habituated to despise all these sublunary trifles. *In his Heart* I say, or Superior part
of

of his Soul, or (which is all one) as soon as he recurs to his Principles, which dwell and govern there; however the *Inferiour*, which feels some trouble, will have some natural grudgings and repinings. But these are little or nothing to God's Commandements, but, rather, an advantage to virtue, or an occasion of merit; so the Superior Part, by strength of Christian Principles, and Supernatural Considerations or Motives, keeps them from growing *Moral* ones, that is, keeps those *Natural* Considerations from settling into *Intentions*: which is the true Touch-stone, how far these or such Motions belong to *Nature*, and how far they relate to *Morality*.

§. 4. But you will say, we do not Experience while we pray, that we practise distinctly any one of these Virtues, now spoken of, nor so much as think of any of those.

those Commandments; nay, many of them seem most Exceedingly remote from our thoughts when we are in Prayer, and a quite different kind of Object. 'Tis answer'd, there are two ways by which divers things may be included in another. The one is call'd *Formally* or being *Formally* there, so that every one of these things retains it's own form and nature, as *Wood* and *Stones* are included in the Fabrick of a House; *Ink* and *Paper* are included in writing; where each preserves it's own Nature distinct from the other, notwithstanding their Concurrence in a common subject. The other is call'd *Eminential*, which happens, when all are there indeed, not *singly* as in themselves, or as remaining yet in their own different Natures, but as contain'd in some *Third* or *Common* Excellency, which has in it the Virtue of all, and yet
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is singly no one. Thus the Sun-Beams include Light and Heat; thus Reason includes in it self, (though in an inferiour degree to Prayer) all Imaginable Acts of Virtue. Thus the force of each Body in Nature is included, as in a kind of Center, in the Indivisible Being and Operativeness of a Spirit. Thus, lastly, all Perfections and Virtues are compriz'd in the most simple and most uncompounded Essence of the Divinity; in which, Justice, Mercy, Power, and the rest are not found in their several Distinct Natures singled out a part, but in *one* most perfect formality call'd *God's Essence*; whose Incomparable Excellency comprehends Eminently both all these and infinit others, which our low pitch of knowledge cannot reach or even think of without dissecting it piecemeal, as it were, by our understanding, and considering each little morsell a part.

Now,

§. 5. Now, this manner of containing others, is by far more excellent than the former; and 'tis *thus* that Prayer comprehends all Virtues, and the several distinct Acts of fulfilling each of the Commandments.

§. 6. For, Prayer being an Elevation of the Soul to God, and this not after a meer speculative way, as an Heathen or an *Aristotle* would think and discourse drily of the first Being, without any farther concern than as it is a kind of curiosity beyond the ordinary reach; but, after an Affective way, endeavouring and aiming, by the Affections (which are the wings of the Soul) and by such thoughts as we are already possess of, to raise our selves to a higher degree of Divine Love, and, by it, of Union with our dear God; Hence it comes to pass, that Prayer is, in its best and most essential Part, an *Actual Exercise*

Exercise of the Love of God, built up in us on the best Foundations and Principles that can possibly be imagin'd, viz. on those Motives which Faith proposes, and actually rais'd by the best and most immediate Disposition imaginable, viz, *Hope*: Daily experience telling us, that nothing moves us so Effectually to pursue any thing which we conceit to be an Eminent Good, as the Hope we have to arrive at it; as on the other side, that, let the thing be never so excellent and alluring an Object in it self, unless we have *Hope* it will, or at least may, be attain'd by us, we may perhaps gaze at it in our thoughts as a fine thing, but never desire it, or work for it, that is, never Effectually Love it.

§. 7. Prayer then being the *best Exercise of the Love of God*; and this Love including in it self Eminentia

nentially all *Virtues*, and being, (as the Scripture tells us) the *fulfilling of all the Commandments*; it follows, first, that Prayer is such likewise, as including in it self that sovereign quality, actually and in the best manner exercis'd, which comprehends eminentially all the rest. It follows next, that, this manner of including them *eminently*, being (as appears by the instance, we brought before of God's Essence, including all perfections,) by far more sublime than the other, Prayer is even in this regard, of a most Incomparable Excellency, and the best Manner imaginable of keeping the Commandments; as indeed 'tis fit that Action should be, which is of it's own nature, an Approach to the Divinity.

Sect.

SECT. III.

**A Third Excellency of
Prayer, in uniting us
to God Intellectually.**

BUT we have not yet taken so near a view of Prayer as we might: much of our former Discourse, especially at the beginning, runs upon the Metaphor, as our low dull pitch of knowledge oftentimes obliges us, when the thing we intend to explicate is very Spiritual and very Sublime. We now come to closer Discoveries of its Nature, by looking with a literal consideration into it's Proper Effects which immediately and necessarily spring from it.

§. 2. That great Man *Aristotle*
(whom

(whom St. Thomas of Aquin follows both in this and most other points of his Doctrin, as fittest by reason of their Truth to explicate Christian Faith) assures us, that the Soul, when it *knows* any thing, has the *very Nature* of the *thing known* in it self, and therefore, *as knowing* it, becomes that *very thing* intellectually. To comfort our assent to so strang a Point, which looks at first sight like a kind of Mystery of Faith, we may reflect that, when we discourse or think of the nature of any thing, (let it be *fire*, a *stone*, or what other thing you will,) this Discourse or Thought passes wholly *within* our mind; and, when 'tis done, the Effect of it remains *there*, and not in things that are *without* us, as it does in other kinds of Actions; as Writing, Cutting, or such like, which leave their impressions, *out* of our minds, in the things we work.

work on: Wherefore also the Object, on which that inward Thought or Discourse, works, must as necessarily be *in* the Soul, too, as Objects of the other sorts of Actions, *Fire*, for Example, or a *Stone*, exist *out of us*, when we work upon them; that is, when we blow the fire or hew the stone: But, this Object of our discourse, or thought, is suppos'd to be the *very Nature of the thing*, (for 'tis *that* we are discoursing about, and not about some lame *resemblance* of it;) wherefore the *very Nature of the thing* is *in* our Soul, or exists there, though after a different manner than it does *out of* the Soul.

§. 3. Then, to clear how this can possibly be, that the *very same* thing can have *two* different manners of *being*, we may reflect how the Frame of a House, or a new invented Figure or Draught, is in
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the mind of the Artificer, while yet it has no being *out of it*: or, how the Essences or Natures of all things were *in God* from all Eternity, when as yet they were *not in themselves*, or according to their own manner of Being. If then, (as 'twas now made Evident) the Soul can *have* the natures of things *in its Knowledge*, it can *be* those things *intellectually*; since what has the nature of any thing in it; 'tis (as it has that nature in it) *that very thing*: for, what is it to be that very thing, but onely to have the nature of that thing in it? The Soul then, as *knowing* any thing, becomes that very thing *intellectually* which it knows.

§. 4. To apply this to our present purpose: As the Blessed in Heaven, seeing *intellectually* Gods very Essence, have the Divine Nature in their knowing Power,
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and so are, God by Participation and intellectually, which is the utmost pitch imaginable that a Creature can possibly arrive to, *Similes ei erimus* says St. John, *quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est*: So those who see God, and think on him as represented to us by Faith, are, according to the inferior pitch of Knowledge we have of God in this state, to some degree Deify'd too. And, though these imperfect resemblances of God, which we borrow from Creatures, do not reach the Divine Nature in it self; yet in case those who pray be instructed (as they ought) that though the Object of their Conception does not properly correspond to God, yet, since the notion their judgment accepts to stand for him is not competible to any Created Nature, they truly have God in their thought, though after an imperfect manner, and so are him

him intellectually. Prayer then being the proper Exercise of *thinking* of God, or *having* him, as held out to us by Faith, *in us* intellectually, that is of *being him* in some manner; (for the Conceptions Faith gives of God, though imperfect ones, yet are true ones, and peculiarly belong to him;) it follows, that we *are* truly *him* in some sort, when by the Exercise of Prayer, we attend to the thought of Him, or address to Him. And thus much is common to all Christians that have Faith: And, were there no more but thus much, 'tis enough to ground this Exhortation of St. Leo. *Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam, et Divinae consors factus naturae noli in veterem vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire: Acknowledge, O Christian, thy own dignity, and being made partaker of the Divine nature, do not debase thy self by degenerate carriage*

riage into thy former Vileness. But Prayer adds an incomparable advance to the common Advantage of Faith. For, the same Reason which proves that we partake the Divine Nature by thinking on it, or conceiving it, concludes also that the more perfect our Conception of God is, the more perfectly we become Him, & approach to Glory; which is the reason why some pure and Elevated Souls by cultivating Faith through continual Prayer, come to gain so sublime an *Idea* of the Divine Nature, that they fall into Transports of Admiration; and, when they return to their customary way of thinking, the memory of it is so precious to them, that they look upon that ravishing state as on a kind of Glory or Heaven, and seem to have been so happy that they could wish no more. Now, 'tis only Prayer that gives the Soul this high Advan-

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vantage: For, by often applying the mind to God, we discover more of the Divine Excellencies; which gains to the Soul a *purser* and *nobler* manner of Understanding *how* and *what* he is in himself. And the like may be said of all the other mysteries of our Faith, according to the Prophet *Esay*, as'tis render'd by the *Septuagint*, c. 7. v. 9. *Nisi credideritis non intelligetis: Unless you will beleieve, you will never Understand.* So that meer Belief must go before to give us Knowledge of the Objects; and then from a firm Belief, cultivated as it ought, follows a more *penetrative Knowledge*, call'd a *Lively Faith*, to which we are wrought up by Prayer; which is a studious Addition of the Mind to those Objects that depure the *Idea* of God from all Dross of Imperfection, and render it far more Chrystallin, Emphyreal, and ravishingly Glorious.

S E C T.

SECT. IV.

**A fourth Excellency of
Prayer, in Uniting us
to God Affectively.**

FROM this more penetrative Knowledge of the Divine Essence, immediately and necessarily follows that disposition of the Will call'd *Divine Love*; or rather indeed, *Love* of God or Creatures is nothing but a *Knowledge* of their Goodness render'd express in our thoughts; either imprinted strongly by solid and well built-Judgments of their Agreeableness to us, or else by frequently-repeated thoughts, as by so many dints, beat out into an expressness. For we experience in our selves, both in loving Creatures,

and in loving Heaven, that if we more fully and lively *conceit* the good in one (Creatures for Example) than the good in the other, (that is, in Heaven) we still chuse and pursue Creatures, even though we speculatively judg that Heaven is incomparably more Excellent. And the reason is, because a more lively *Conceit*, *hic et nunc*, or in these present circumstances, that the former is more agreeable to us, taking us as we are thus dispos'd, renders the Soul more Operative for it; which Active Disposition of the Mind to pursue any thing it judges agreeable or *Good*, we use to call *Love*.

§.2. Whence again are seen two considerable advantages in Prayer, in which also the sum of our Christian Life is contain'd; *viz.* to beget a fervent and hearty Love of God in our hearts, and to enable us to over-come all Temptations; both

both which are perform'd by rendering the *Idea's* of the Goods of the other Life very *Lively*, and, as it were, *Bright* in our minds : for, this done, they will be sure to work Love of Heaven above all things in our Hearts, if they be not that very Love it self; which will efface, or at least dim with their far more resplendent Lustre, the gay appearances of false and transitory goods, and so preserve the Soul from being deluded by her three spiritual Enemies. For which Reason they that are in Temptations are as much bound in Conscience to apply themselves to Prayer, as a man in danger to lose his Life by a distemper he feels growing upon him, is bound to make use of such helps as Physick assists us with; nay rather much more, according as the greater concern of the thing, and the greater Certainty of the success and Cure, are

more powerful motives to make them act and endeavour to seek a remedy.

§. 3. Now the Love of Heaven being thus wrought in our minds by Prayer, and Love being unitive of the Soul to the Object belov'd, according to the common saying dictated by our natural thoughts, that, *if two love one another, they are all one*, 'tis farther discover'd how incomparably Prayer dignifies and ennobles the Soul; & this to a great degree beyond what meer knowledg, that is, knowledge staying in speculation, and not render'd efficacious by considerative Prayer could have effected. If then every Power receives a different degree of Nobleness in proportion to the Object it is employ'd about; Nay, if in our case it becomes *it* intellectually, and be in a more intimate manner united to it by Love, and the Object of the Soul, while

while in Prayer, is Gods own Infinite Effence, it follows that, Prayer, which being at once *Studious* and *Affective*, performs both these, advances a Soul to so high a Pitch of Dignity, that not all the Potentates of the Earth, and Learning of the Wise, nor Riches of both the Indies conspiring together, no not the whole innumerable Host of Angelical Natures joining all their force, can raise her to that heighth of Dignity, that Vicinity to the Divine Nature as Prayer can do. Who then that loves true Nobility, and the solid Perfection of his Soul, but will apply himself to the means of gaining so high Preferment? And how strangely is the indevout part of the World Frantick, who look upon Prayer as an idle Bigottery and Fruitless Entertainment of our mind in airy conceits, without any farther

ther Effect or Benefit ?

§. 4. For the same Reason a Soul unemploy'd in Prayer, and so unconcern'd to frame lively *Idea's* of the goodness of Heaven's blissful State, that is, how beautifying and ennobling an Object Gods Essence is, but makes some Creature the study of its Affective Thoughts, and first Love of its Will, becomes that Creature, though never so base, and wretched, and never advances higher, She is Married as it were, to that mean Object by her giving it her Love, and is debased or rais'd to that degree of Vileness or Dignity, as is found in the thing to which she is Espous'd; if it be *Earth*, she is *Earthy*; if it be *Flesh*, she is *Carnal*; if *Money*, she is no more worth than *shining dirt* is; if *Honour*, she is *Empty* and *Aleery*. And justly too, since she had the means to advance her self by Prayer,

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er, and rather chose to ly groveling on the ground, and wallow in the dirt, than raise her head by it to the Glorious Fountain of all true Excellency.

§. 5. From what is said, may be collected also, What advantage accrues to Souls by their Devotions to Angels and Saints in Heaven. First, they that intend to benefit themselves by this way, ought to frame in their thoughts a most exact *Idea* of the holy and happy state the Blessed enjoy; how full of Conformity to Gods Will, and thence how not only Inclinal, but unchangeably fixt to follow Right Reason, and act according to Highest Virtue in all things; how boundlessly their Souls are enlarg'd by Charity to embrace all the World, and wish them from their Hearts, and unenviously all the goods they see they can possibly be capable of,

even though they see it will be greater than their own; How their Understanding Power is replenish'd, with a most Incomparable Glory, or surrounded with Rays of most pure and most bright Light of Knowledge, and, their Wills most indissolubly united with, and immerst most intimately in the boundless Ocean of all Goodness. By which means those happy Persons become Deify'd or rais'd to such a Dignity that all the Glories of the World put together are empty beggery and worthless trash in comparison of that noble and close Relation to the Divinity, or (which is more) Union with it.

§. 6. Particularly of the Saints, it is fit devout persons first chuse those whose state here was agreeable to their own, to some degree; then, attentively 'read their Lives, soberly writ; regarding more their solid
Virtues

virtues proposed there to their Imitation, than the *Esclat* of their Miracles, which are but the likely signes of true goodness, and need an eminent and constantly practised Virtue, accompanying them, to make them such; since the power of doing Miracles, Propheying and the like, has been granted even to Heathens, on some occasions, as St. *Hierom* and the Fathers inform us. Having thus gain'd a lively Character of the particular Spirit that such a Saint has, if we cultivate it in our minds with a high Esteem of it, and of the Saint as endow'd with such and such Virtues, and so let it sink into our Wills, and grow a desire to attain it, and all this be heighten'd and made more lively and more Efficacious by applying to the Saint himself by Prayer, or invoking him to obtain of God's Goodness that portion of his virtuous Spirit, which he sees fitting
for

for us, we shall at length be wrought up (an endeavour to imitate him going along) into the very *genius* of that Saint, and as it were become *him*, and make *his* Merits *ours*: not by Extrinsecal Imputation, as if because we daily ask't Virtue for the Saints sake, without any other disposition on our part, they are shar'd out to us, and as it were extrinsecally apply'd to our Wills, and so better our interiour; Let none flatter themselves with such Hopes, for Catholick Faith admits no Extrinsecal Imputation of Christ's Merits, much less of those of the Saints: But, this is perform'd by proposing their Virtuous Example as an Object, which by being penetrated lively, and thence desir'd heartily, makes us become like the Saint himself, that is *Virguons*. And this, because 'tis the very Nature of the Soul to become that thing by her Understanding
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and Will which it studiously knows and affectionately loves; and in that very regard too, and to that degree in which we apply our selves considerately to know it and heartily to love it. But this will better be understood by what follows after.

§. 7. Hence also is seen the true use of *Pictures*, keeping Holidays of Saints, and such other Devotions: All which renewing in our minds the thoughts of such a virtuous person must needs be beneficial; since they purify our mind by familiarizing it to such holy and Elevated Objects, and by helping it to make the Character of the Saints virtuous life, and of it's particular agreeableness to us, more express; till at length, by Will and Affection as well as by meer Understanding, we become in a manner *It*. But especially these helps are necessary to those who arrive
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not at the Love of spiritual Goods, by strength of Judgment or clear Evidence of Reason, but by often reiterated impressions of Objects upon the knowing Power by means of the Senses. I meddle not here with other more wonderful Effects done by our Application to Saints and their Intercession for us when the Faith of him that prays requires it; the Principles of which are to be laid so deep, and are withal so remote from our present purpose, that it would be too long a digression to attempt here their Explication.

SECT.

SECT. V.

Of the Excellency of
Prayer, as tis the In-
fallible means to obtain
all our best wishes.

THe Impetrative Part of Pray-
er, or the virtue it has of
obtaining from God infallibly what
ever we ask for our selves, that
we can be sure is our true Good,
is perhaps as great an incentive to
exercise it as any of the rest.
This seems to be a Doctrine no
less comfortable than strange.
We ought then to unriddle it, and
make it out. And, first, we must
remark, that we can never be sure
that any External thing is good
for

for us; be it Riches, Honour, Pleasure, Health, Friends, &c. For, to many, all these have been the occasion of their Damnation, as they have of Salvation to others. Nay, some are of that *Genius* and so circumstanc'd, that nothing but Extream Misery in this World can keep them from Sinning; others again are so temper'd, that they grow desperate by great and continual crosses, and fall into a stupidity or disregard of all duties, if press'd heavily by afflictions: Nay more, speaking of *Interior* perfections, which have a greater vicinity to Virtue, even *Knowledge* has made some *solidly Virtuous*, others *vainly Proud*. Nothing therefore, but that perfection of the mind call'd *Virtue*, is securely good for us. Since then 'tis directly against Reason to wish pressingly and absolutely those things which we know not whether they will do us
good

good or harm; Reason tells us we are not to beg of God *absolutely* any thing but *Virtue*: The rest only *Conditionally*, or with this reservation, *in case our Heavenly Father judges we have need of them, or, in case he sees them convenient for us.* And 'tis of *this* I affirm, that if it be askt of God by Prayer, it will be *always Granted*, and that too to the *very same* degree as is our fervency in asking it.

§. 2. To understand how this is effected, we must reflect that, to *Pray* for any *Virtue*, is earnestly to *wish* it; as also that Prayer, if perform'd attentively and as it ought, is the most Serious action of our whole life, being a Treaty or Communication with God; the secret of our Hearts, with whom 'tis the most irreverent folly that may be not to be in earnest, when we profess it outwardly. Prayer therefore for *Virtue* is the *most serious*
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and *most effectual* act of the *Will* imaginable, strongly set and bent towards the attainment of that perfection we pray for; that is, 'tis a frequent and hearty wish of Virtue. And what is Virtue, but a confirm'd Disposition of the *Will* to do our Duties to God and Man? or an *habitual will* to act according to Right Reason and Christian Principles? And how are *Habits* got, but by oft repeated or very effectual *Acts*? since then, when ever we pray for Virtue as we ought, *both these* are found in the Exercise of that Prayer (for, we both repeat often our Wishes, which are *Acts* of our *Will*, and withall they are the *most serious, most solemn* and *most Elevated Acts* that can be, and thence very *Efficacious*): it follows, that the *Praying* for Virtue is the very *gaining* it; in the same manner as warming continued and advanc't begett's Heat,

Heat ; and Heat, a Flame.

§. 3. You will say, all this gives no great account of any Particularity in Prayer, towards the attainment of Virtue ; since, according to this Doctrin, the frequent considering with our selves, and pondering well the Excellency of Virtue may beget *Wishes* of it, and consequently Virtue in us ; and this in as high a manner, if well followed, as Prayer does. I answer first, the case is impossible ; for, except, when we wish to get Virtue, we aim at Heaven by thus wishing it ; 'tis not true Virtue we wish, but some Apish resemblance of it, to make us esteem'd by the world, or for some other Temporal End : And, if, in setting our selves to consider it's Goodness and Excellency (which consists in this, that it disposes us for Heaven) and thence wishing it, we aim'd at the attainment

ment of Heaven, or the Blissful Sight of God by it, we were in prayer all the while we wisht it, after some manner; though perhaps there went not along with it the Addressive part to God by way of Petition; which yet, 'tis very hard should be wanting in those who habitually know by Faith, and by Christian Language and Practice are inur'd to acknowledge, that all Goods, especially Supernatural ones, come from God.

§. 4. Next I answer, that there is no doubt, but a true *Sight* of the excellency and utility of Virtue, improv'd by our consideration, may cause some degrees of Wishes or Desires of it, and so beget Virtue at first, or advance it something: But, that all those means are dry and inefficacious without Prayer, will appear by the Advantages found in Prayer. As First, that while our thoughts are set upon him
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who is our last End, we take our aim more steadily at the means by which we are to attain him. 2^{ly}. Faith, which we suppose to go before Prayer, telling us all comes from him, it heightens our Soul, and consequently Fancy, far above that pitch to which Natural and Unelevated thoughts could have rais'd them. 3^{ly}. Faith telling us also he is the Fountain of all Virtue, the very Approach to him by Prayer and begging it of him is the *drawing* it into our selves, from his Inexhaustible Treasures of all Good. 4^{ly}. Faith, telling us he has promis'd to hear our prayers which are made according to his own holy will, and that prayers for Virtue are such, makes us firmly *hope*, our petition will be granted: and a Hope thus rais'd, renders our wish of it far more efficacious; as we experience passes in our selves in other matters, when we are assur'd of

of getting them, and, as it were just upon the point of attaining them. This Hope also fixes and comforts our Thoughts in confidence of having *already* gain'd *some*, and of attaining yet *more*; by which means they are kept up and continu'd in the pursuit of what we ask for, and relapse not into a stupid want of expectation. sly, While our minds are more rais'd by Prayer to an ardent *Love of God*, our Will is proportionably rais'd to a more fervent *wish of Virtue*, which is already known to be the proper means to attain him; In the same manner as one, who knows certainly a Treasure is hid in such a place, and is his if he will go for it, is very prompt to *wish*, nay resolute to *get* and use *means* to obtain it: Whereas on the other side, that is, when our thoughts are not made lively by Prayer, the thoughts of Heaven being so
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distant and hard to be represented by fancy, it seems but a kind of dry speculation, and dull in comparison. 6ly, Since, as was said, the nature of our soul is such, that, to know any thing what ever, is to have that very thing in our Understanding; and that, Prayer improving this Knowledg to a Liveliness or exprefness, it becomes Active to obtain it, or which is all one, it becomes Will; it follows that, by much and lively thinking and conceiting the Goodness of Virtue, we arrive to have it in our Will: I mean, we have in our Will a *Disposition to Act according to right Reason inform'd by Faith*, that is indeed, we have attain'd *Virtue*; this being its very Nature and Definition. Lastly, since, as was shown before, by Prayer the Soul is to some degree (*inferior* indeed, but yet *truly*) Deify'd or made one with God, that
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is, with him who *includes* Eminently all Virtues, or rather *is* those very Virtues *Essentially*: it follows necessarily, that the soul addicted to *Prayer*, especially when she Prays *knowingly*, and thence raises her self to *Love*, must have *all Virtues* in her; nay, *be* those very Virtues, according as her pitch of Love of God advances her, and her present state in this life will permit her.

§. 10. From this Doctrine we may draw these Consequences: First, that, though we ought to pray for Temporal Goods always with resignation and conditionally, there is no need of adding either of these cautions when we pray for *Virtue*, but we may wish it absolutely, without any measure or stint; since we are sure 'tis alwayes of it self agreeable to Gods Will, and our own true Good; in asking *or* desiring which
God's

God's Goodness has limited no Man. — You'll say then, one may wish as high a Pitch of Virtue, as the greatest Saints had; nay, that of our Blessed *Lady* her self. 'Tis answer'd; Since the *means* to arrive at so high a Degree of Virtue as others, is to wish it *with* as pure an Intention, and as *fer-*
vently as they do: none is to wish the *End*, without the proper *means* to it; but to labour all they can to put the *means*; that is, to gain a *fervent* desire of it from God (by *Prayer*, qualify'd according to all the Particulars above-said) as that of those Saints was; and then, they may be sure 'tis absolutely God's Will, both as Author of Nature and Super-naturals, that Effects should spring out of Proper Causes, and Immediate Dispositions. Nay, we know this with a greater Assurance, than that any Effect of Nature will succeed:

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For

For example, Fire burn, or Rain wet: For, it becomes God's Goodness, sometimes, to alter the Course of Nature miraculously for higher Ends, even when Natural Dispositions are ready, and require to produce Natural Effects; but, it can never consist with his sweetest Goodness, to hinder those from having Virtue, who are immediately dispos'd for it. Whether those that pray, shall attain an Immediate Disposition to so high a Virtue as those had, is another Question: But, it is certain, God has laid no Commands upon any, to deterr him from doing his best to attain it; but has propos'd Saints to our imitation *absolutely*, and not to a *Degree* only: For, as the saying is, He that aims at the Sun, though he be sure he shall never hit his Mark, yet he will shoot higher than he that aims only at a Bush. But, how high Steps
every

every particular Soul ought to take at once, belongs to Super-natural Prudence, and Discretion of Spirits; and therefore, 'tis the proper Office of a Wise *Ghostly-Father*, to determin it: And his only Care must be, to be sure the Soul proceeds still by Immediate Dispositions; for otherwise, the taking great Leaps at once in a Spiritual Progress, generally strains the Connaturality of *Devotion*, and ends in *Indevotion* or *Sloth*. In a word, Let him that prays, be only attentive to ask Virtue of God, with as much Fervency as he will; and then, leave the Effect to Him who is a Faithful Promiser, and a full Rewarder.

II. *Secondly*, Since this Assurance is so great, let him that Prayes ask his true and certain Good, *Virtue*, without any *wavering* or *doubting*; but with an absolute Confidence in God's Good-

ness or Mercy: For, can we be surer of any thing, than that a Miracle shall not hinder the Effect, if we put the Immediate Dispositions to it by Prayer? And this Security we have of attaining Virtue, if we pray for it fervently, and as we ought.

12. *Thirdly*, The same Certainty is of the Effect, if one Prays for the Forgiveness of his Sins: For, Prayer being a hearty Wish of what we pray for, made Fervent by those Advantages we have above enumerated; it follows, that it moulds (as it were) and frames the Soul into an absolute and resolute Will of forsaking Sin, and warms it with Affection to her true Good. But, great Care must be had of praying God to pardon our Sins, while yet our Wills are ty'd fast to the sinful Objects; For, that were to require of Him to do more than Miracle:
Love

Love of God alone finally, or the Holy-Ghost in their Hearts, being the only *Remission* of Sins; and the Love of any Creature, otherwise than in order to that Love, being the proper Notion of *Sin*: So that, as impossible as it is, that we should Love God alone finally, and a Creature above, or not in order to him, both at once, (which is no less than a direct Contradiction); so impossible it is, that Sin should be pardon'd, till the Inordinate Affection be taken from the Objects of it.

13. But, what shall those poor Sinners do, who have not a Will to leave Sin; or at least, but a divided Will; as was St. *Augustin's* Case before his Conversion, which he so complainingly descants upon in his *Confessions*? I answer, They must still take the same Method; that is, strive by continual Prayer, (made after that weak manner, at

least, as they are able) to improve those Imperfect Wills, into Perfect Ones; and, groaning under the Slavery they now fully experience, at once sigh and tremble before their justly offended God: Which kind of Exercise in this case, is more profitable and proper for them to use, than Love of God; of which their Hearts, yet full of Filth, are at present uncapable. Yet, their utmost Industry must be imploy'd, by Faith and some Degree of Hope, (which are here the only *Acters*) to promote and advance these good Motions and Graces of the Holy-Ghost, not yet *within* them, but only *moving* them to towards that Grace, by which the same Holy-Ghost enters into their Heart, and *inhabits* there. The hardest struggle is at first, till the Scales begin to turn; which done, all is easie to us, if we pursue our Victory.

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But, for those who are in this State, it were very fit that Mortification went along with Prayer; to wean, deter, and divert the Soul from the noxious Gust she took in sinful Objects.

14. *Lastly*, We may hence admire the Wise Methods, and Matchless Bounty of our good God, in alluring us by so many Motives to apply to him by Prayer, that so we may arrive at true Happiness; and giving us, by the very asking, (that is, as soon as ever we ask) all that is our certain and true Good, or all we can, according to right Reason, heartily beg of him. You'll say, It will follow hence, that if one immediately ask Heaven, he shall have it. I answer, That this were the same manner of fond Petition, but far more highly unreasonable, as to ask the Virtue of our Lady or the Apostles, without thinking of putting first

the Immediate Disposition to have it: which is to press God to do a Miracle for our sakes; a thing true Humility & Reverence, the Requisites to a rightly made Prayer, will scarce allow. And, so, still our general Principle remains firm to us, that we shall be sure to obtain what we pray for, when we ask for our true Good, so we ask as we ought. Now, the Immediate Disposition to Heaven being *Love of God*, if we pray for the Means, we shall be sure both to obtain This, and Heaven too, which is our End, by it: Which secures to us the Effect of our Prayer, or the Accomplishment of our Wishes; though it come not to us after our own foolish manner, but according to the Method our infinitely Wise God has appointed; that is, that all things even in Super-naturals, (except in some few Cases) be carryed forwards from Connatural Causes

Causes or Dispositions to proper Effects. Which Consequence of the Effects out of their proper Causes, is the true meaning of the Word *Merit* (so misrepresented by our Adversaries); only super-adding, That God has *promis'd* this certain Effect shall follow, and that the Generality of the Faithful Work out of that Consideration, or out of a Relyance on God's *Promises*, without knowing (perhaps) *how* this Promise is brought about, or *perform'd* to us: Which, yet, when known by those who are capable of understanding it, must needs add a strange Degree of Comfort, and an exceeding Courage to employ themselves in Prayer.

Whence may be easily Collected, that I only concern my self with that kind of Impetrative Virtue, by which rightly made Prayer obtains certainly of God our true Spirit.

Spiritual Good; that by Thewing the *Connatural Efficacy* of it, and with how necessary a Consequence the Attainment of Virtue springs from it: I may excite my *Readers*, to pursue that best Duty; and withal, by the way, instruct them how to perform it. What other Virtue Prayer has, of obtaining many things of God for our selves, and our Neighbour, by obliging his infinit Goodness and Wisdom in his Government of the World, so to contrive and order Things, that not one Prayer of the Just be left unavailable, as far as can possibly consist with the common Good of the Universe; nay, even so far as, if the Prayer be made with a perfect Faith, Confidence and firm Relyance upon him, to alter the Course of Nature by Miracle, for such a Prayer's sake: Of these, I say, it is not my purpose to treat at present,

sent; it being out of my Road, as depending on Principles, which ly very remote from my present Design; as was said formerly, in a like Case, concerning Prayer to Saints, at the End of the *Fourth Section*.

I shall end this Discourse with those most expressive Words of *St. James*: *If any one wants Wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all abundantly, and without grudging; and it shall be given him. But, let him ask in Faith, nothing doubting: For, he that doubts is like a Wave of the Sea, which is mov'd and tost about by the Wind. Let not, then, such a Man think, that he shall obtain any thing of our Lord.* Where we are to note, first, that by *Wisdom* is not meant *Speculative Knowledge*; but that *Wisdom*, which is our certain and true *Spiritual Good*; and of which, the *Fear of God* is the *Beginning*,
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as the *Love of God* is its Accomplishment or *Perfection*. Next, he assures us, *It shall be given*, and that without *grudging*, or upbraiding any, that they have receiv'd enough already; but *abundantly*, without stint, so they dispose themselves by Prayer to receive it. *Thirdly*, He puts the Disposition to receive it, to be a firm Hope, *Faith*, or Confidence in God's overflowing Goodness; which is strengthen'd by knowing that what we ask, is agreeable to his Holy Will. *Lastly*, He declares, that the want of this Confidence in asking, renders our whole Prayer *ineffectual*: For, the Wish cannot be strong and efficacious, to work the Soul into a hearty and habitual Love of God, if it be held before-hand (as it ought), that it cannot be had without God's giving it; and the Asker thinks that, let him ask Virtue how he will,
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it is yet an obscure kind of Mystery lying in God's Breast, and depending on his meer Will, whether he will please to give him any Virtue or no; and that, let him pray for it how he will, there are yet no determinate or certain Causes laid in the Course of his Supernatural Providence to attain it; and thence comes to doubt, whether he shall ever obtain any Virtue, or none at all, which is very uncomfortable. Whereas, were it known, and well penetrated, that God's Will is already, as to that Point, determined by his Wisdom, governing and promoting Souls by Prayer to Virtue, and by Virtue to Heaven, as by proper Dispositions to those Effects (according to that Saying of the Psalmist: *They shall rise from Virtue to Virtue, till they see the God of Gods in Sion*): Also, were it known and consider'd, that an unwavering

wavering (and, thence, efficacious) Prayer or Wish, strengthen'd by directing it to God, is the proper Disposition or Means effectually, and necessarily (as we may say) to gain Virtue: It will become impossible, to want Courage to ask it heartily, and absolutely; impossible, to waver or want Assuredness in our asking it; impossible, our Wishes of it should not become an Efficacious Means to obtain it: Lastly, impossible, we should not obtain what we ask.

Soli Deo Gloria.

F I N I S.



